

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1818.—VOL. LXX.)

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 29, 1898.

[PRICE ONE PENCE.]



"CLOTILDE, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS MASQUERADED?" SAID MAJOR L'ESTRANGE, STERNLY.

MRS. GLENNY'S SECRET.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

A HOT, scorching day in July, when to talk appeared even too great a fatigue, and one cared to do nothing but to lie dreaming, half-asleep, half-awake, and listen to the murmur of the waves, as they lazily lapped the pebbly beach, for even they appeared too indolent to rush in tossing and foaming as was their custom, but would leisurely bathe the hot stones, and then roll back to the big ocean.

But the *Skylark* was going, notwithstanding all—but then the *Skylark* always is going at Brighton; and the little fat man in white trousers and blue jacket, the owner of the same, had screamed himself hoarse in asserting that fact to the visitors assembled on the beach, as one of

the vessels—for there were two of them—was launched into the water with scarce wind enough to flap her sails, as she slowly moved on to the air of "A life on the ocean wave," which resounded from the cornet on her deck.

"Are you going, ma'am?" asked Mr. Collins, as a lady in black advanced from where she had been watching a man eating burning tow, with as much relish as though it had been roast goose, to the remaining boat which was fast filling for a trip on the quiet sea.

She was about twenty-six years of age, *petite* and fair, with dark, restless eyes, and a clear, white forehead scarcely visible under the dead-gold hair which buried it beneath its curling mass; but, as the man's words fell on her ear, she smiled, thus disclosing a row of pearly teeth from between her coral lips, and for the moment the pained look which was customary to her features passed away.

"You don't think it will come on rough before we return?" she asked. "The clouds seem to be gathering to the west."

"Lor! no, ma'am," replied the former, as he cast his nautical eye in the direction indicated; "no fear o' that. The breeze is freshenin' a bit, which 'll make it all the pleasanter," and at last, having secured her as a passenger, he turned to inform other intending cruisers that "The *Skylark* was going."

"I hope I shan't be ill," said a young girl, who sat next to the lady who had taken her seat, when with sundry creaks and groans the little vessel at last floated on the blue waves, her white canvas spread to catch the little wind there was.

"Are you a bad sailor, then?" asked the latter.

"It is the first time I was ever on the sea," she answered; "and, although I promised Harry I would go with him, when I saw some of them when they came back yesterday after a sail I felt half afraid. There was one girl looked so awfully ill," and she gave a little scream as the boat gave a sudden lurch.

"Oh! you are a silly, Meggie," said her brother.

"But that is nothing with her," he continued, addressing the lady in a tone of apology for his sister's weakness; "she always screams at everything, from a spider to a fly, whilst the sight of mouse would send her into hysterics."

"It is too bad, Harry!" said the girl. "But you won't believe him, will you?" she asked.

"I suppose not," replied the lady, but as the freshening breeze, which Mr. Collins had prognosticated, threw the vessel on her side, thus causing the waves for the moment to administer an unexpected bath to those seated in that unfortunate position, Meggie uttered a terrific yell, which brought a smile to her companion's face, whilst at the same time she assured the girl there was no danger, the truth of which it took the combined efforts of both to convince her of, it being a fact she was unable to understand until they were once again on terra-firma.

"I am afraid you did not enjoy your trip very much?" said the former, as they stepped on the beach, and she held out her hand to say good-bye.

"I should have been miserable alone with Harry," was the reply; "but you were so kind, and didn't laugh every time I was frightened. I should so much like to see you again," and the girl looked with wistful eyes into the sad ones of the elder lady.

"I shall be very glad," said the latter. "My name is Mrs. Glenny, and I am invariably on the beach in the morning. But you have not told me who you are?" she added, with a smile.

"Oh, my papa is Sir Percy L'Estrange, and we are staying at the Grand. Mamma is an invalid, you must know; but here they come," she added, as a gentleman, walking by the side of a bath-chair, was seen approaching. "Don't go yet; they will be so glad to see you."

"You must excuse me to-day," Mrs. Glenny replied. "Another time, perhaps," and, hastily shaking hands, she turned, but not before the sudden spasm of pain which passed over her features had become noticeable to her new friends.

"I am sure she was not well," said Marguerite to her brother. "Did you see how white she turned; and she is so nice! I am sorry."

"So nice!" scornfully repeated Harry, who prided himself on his worldly wisdom. "Just like you, taking violent fancies to people you have never seen before and know nothing about! I can tell you, Miss L'Estrange, I don't think my father will be pleased. What do we know of this Mrs. Glenny, just meeting her on a pleasure-boat?"

"Oh, go on, Harry! One would think you were fifty instead of a boy of twenty!" said his sister, and then she hastened to her mother's side, excitedly pouring out her tale of the day's adventures into the invalid's ears, whilst the former walked on with the baronet.

Lady L'Estrange listened to the girl's story, a gleam of pleasure passing over her pallid face, as the former laughingly repeated the terrors she had experienced on board the *Skylark*, ending with a glowing description of Mrs. Glenny.

"I wish you had seen her, mamma," she said. "She is so pretty; and there was no harm in my talking to her and wishing to see her again, was there?" asked Meggie, as she remembered Harry's assertion that Sir Percy would be displeased.

"Well, dear, of course, it is not advisable for young people to form acquaintances with persons of whom they know nothing; but Mrs. Glenny may turn out to be a lady for all that, and a very desirable acquaintance. Did she tell you anything of herself?"

"She only said she was a widow, mamma dear, but I am quite sure she is a lady," said Marguerite, when Sir Percy L'Estrange turning round at the time to say they had better repair to the hotel for lunch, the conversation ended.

"Has Uncle Harry written to my when he will be here, father?" asked Harry, who, having partly appeased the appetite he had gained from his sea trip, entered into the general topic of conversation between the other members of the family, which was the advent of his father's brother.

"Yes; I only heard this mornin'" replied

the latter. "He is awfully shattered, he writes, from his late service in the Soudan, but hopes, with rest and good air, quickly to recover himself."

"How old is he, papa?" asked Marguerite. "I haven't seen him since I left school, but he seemed quite young."

"He is young, my child, compare to me," answered the Baronet. "He was the son of my father's second wife. He can't be more than thirty at the outside. Do you think so, Maddie?"

"I should think not," replied Lady L'Estrange, languidly raising her head from the sofa-cushion where she was reclining. "Bye-bye, Percy, have you heard anything of Colonel Petro lately?"

"Petro, poor fellow! I don't think anyone has. Both town and country house have been shut since his wife's death, and I understand he has left England," her husband replied. "And that reminds me, Maddie," he continued, "I must put a veto on Maggie making friends promiscuously. This Mrs. Glenny Harry was telling me about may be a very nice person, but after what happened in the Petro's family one cannot be too careful;" and he was about to leave the room after having thus delivered himself when a sudden exclamation from his daughter, who was looking from the window on the pass-by, caused him to turn.

"Come here, papa dear, quick!" she said. "There is Mrs. Glenny."

And, as Sir Percy approached, a little black-robed woman passed on the other side. It was too far distant to discern her features, but the outlines of her perfect figure were distinctly visible as the soft fabric of her dress was blown around her by the wind which had followed the quiet calm of the early morning; and, as a sudden gust lifted her hat from her head, her dead-gold hair became unloosed from its fastenings, whilst it was lifted and tossed by the unvarying breeze.

CHAPTER II.

WHOLLY unconscious that she was an object of interest to the party at the hotel window, Mrs. Glenny, after having recovered her hat, and restored her hair a little to order, proceeded on her way towards Hove.

It was quieter there, and she could sit down close to the water's edge, and hold communion with the white-crested waves as they rolled in and tumbled at her feet, whilst she reviewed in her mind the circumstances which had led her to be alone in the liveliest of watering-places.

The lodgings she had taken were in a small street, some distance from the sea, but she felt suffocated within the four confined walls of that small parlour, feeling as though she would choke, until, leaving the streets behind her, she could feel the sea breeze fan her cheek, giving her a fresh desire to live, away from the misery which had but a short time back caused her to pray for death.

She heeded not the hours as they passed, so wrapt was she in memories of the past. One or two nurses with their infant charges passed, whilst as in a dream she heard their childish prattle, and then the notes from the band on the pier were borne to her on the wind—like the strains of an Aeolian harp—to die until another breath stirred them into renewed life.

But the restless eyes still retained their restlessness, and at times she would start with an undefined fear.

She had taken a book from a small bag she carried, endeavouring to read; but unable to fix her wandering mind on its contents, she let it fall on the wet stones, falling again into a deep reverie, until the growing shadows of evening gathered around her rose with the intention of returning home, when, with a perceptible shudder, she again resumed her seat, crouching so that the wan light should not fall on her features, as two men passed close by.

They were deeply engaged in conversation, and her black dress in the growing twilight caused them to pass her without observation.

"Thank Heaven," she ejaculated, as she

watched their receding figures; and then, hastily rising, she quickly followed in their footsteps, until she approached so near as to be enabled to hear their conversation, the wind blowing the sound towards her, as from the same cause, and the roar of the ocean. Her movements were unheard by them.

"When did you come down, did you say, Alf?" asked one, a well-dressed man of about thirty-two, whose features, although handsome, were of a coarse type, not denoting gentle birth, whilst his companion appeared to have studied to a greater extent the manners in unison with the clothes he wore, the gentleman's gentleman being stamped on all his actions.

"Last night," replied Alf. "I was so deuced miserable I couldn't stay in town; although, to tell you the truth, I think it the best thing that could happen to both of us," and then the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

"But whose fault was it?" asked his friend.

"Oh! mine, I suppose, but who'd have thought she'd cut up so rough!" said Alf; "but mind you, did fellow, I'll find her out."

"And how long are you going to stay here?" inquired the other.

"Till Thursday," replied Alf. "I shall be sick of it by that time. But come on; let's go into the Aquarium for an hour or two;" and they turned off to carry out their intention as Mrs. Glenny rushed on to her lodgings.

"Lor, ma'am, you do look white; ain't you well?" asked the landlady, as with every limb shaking, and out of breath, the latter entered.

"No, I am not very well, Mrs. Durton," she replied. "Don't mind about supper. I would rather go to bed;" and ascending to the room above she soon divested herself of hat and jacket, throwing herself half undressed on the spotless coverlet of her little bed; and, when later on, the former quietly entered to know if she required anything, she lay with the dark eyes, now wearing a frightened look, still unclosed, as the moon shining in on her white face made her look almost ghastly beneath her rays.

But the door opening, with an effort she let the heavy eyelids close when Mrs. Durton, concluding she was asleep, quietly withdrew.

How long the thus remained she scarcely knew, as far into the silent watches of the night she resolved in her mind the danger which she had so providentially averted.

"Thank Heaven," she ruminated; "Thursday, and I shall be safe; but could it have been by design or chance that he is here? And then the L'Estranges; how strange that both on the same day should cross my path!"

To Mrs. Durton's inquiries on the following morning, she felt too ill to leave the house, but would descend to the sitting-room after a short time, and should anyone by chance call for her, please to say she had left.

"Oh! that puts me in mind," responded the landlady, "there was two gents called here yesterday afternoon, but they asked for Mrs.—Mrs. There, there, what a head I have to be sure. I forgot the name, but it worn't nothin' like yours, ma'am, so I suppose they'd made a mistake."

"Doubtless, Mrs. Durton," replied her lodger. "I do not expect anyone, but feel so ill that, should such a thing occur, remember I am not here," and with a sigh of relief she let her weary head fall on the pillow, as the door closed behind the former.

What an interminable length did those three days appear, as she wandered from parlour to kitchen, and from them to a tiny yard, which was the extent to which her restless feet could roam in the limited space of Mrs. Durton's domain, when she would, for a few moments, stay to listen to the history of the Durton family, going back to the third and fourth generation, with which that lady would acquaint her, until wearied with the doings of those dead and living of that name, as equally of the virtues with which the late Mr. Durton, poor dear, was supposed to have been endowed, by his faithful spouse, she would again return to the sitting-room to endeavour to while away those long hours with a book, until weary of her imprisonment, she would close her eyes in a waking dream.

It seemed as a fresh pleasure when once again she wandered to the beach, and for the time being her thoughts became distracted from the trouble which had so recently filled her mind. There she watched the yachts, whilst their owners again plied for passengers, until her restless limbs could stay no longer, and she strolled on to where there were fewer to disturb the quietude of her thoughts when, throwing herself on the warm pebbles, she listened to the roar of the waves, as they danced and foamed in the sunlight, until the sound of voices behind her caused her to turn her head.

"Oh! Mrs. Glenny, I am so glad to have met you!" exclaimed a bright, girlish voice, and Marguerite L'Estrange held out her hand to the widow, who rose to meet her. "Look, here is papa; you must let me introduce you," and, notwithstanding the edict which the Baronet had passed, Meggie led her new friend to where her father with Harry were advancing.

The latter raised his hat as they approached, and Sir Percy could not avoid but too palpably showing the admiration he felt for the petite figure as she returned the salutation, whilst a something in the lovely face seemed familiar to him.

She was a lady, there was no doubt about that, which a few moments' conversation sufficed to show; and far from blaming his daughter for forming friendships with strangers, he was, later on, as loud in his praises of the little woman as Meggie herself.

"I have to thank you, Mrs. Glenny, for your kindness a few days ago to my foolish little girl," he said, as he cordially shook her tiny gloved hand.

"I am afraid you overrate any little I may have done towards her comfort," was the reply, "though I am only too glad that she so highly esteemed it."

"I am led to understand from my children that you are by yourself here. You must find it very lonely," said Sir Percy; "but I hope now that you will often join our party."

"You are very kind," and a vivid flush suffused the widow's face; "but I rarely feel lonely."

They had sauntered up from the beach to the pier, the Baronet evidently forgetting his former prejudices as he succumbed to the charms of the stranger; and ended by introducing her to his wife, whose bath-chair was seen approaching.

And when they at last parted, "Charming, perfectly charming!" was all the answer he gave Lady L'Estrange when she asked his opinion of their new acquaintance.

CHAPTER III.

The happiness to which she had been a stranger so long seemed suddenly to have thrown its light over the life of Mrs. Glenny; the restless, half-frightened eyes would now brighten with unconcealed pleasure, as hour after hour was passed in the society of the Baronet's family.

"Uncle Hersey will be here to-morrow," said Marguerite one afternoon, as they strolled where the tide being low, numerous little ones of all classes paddled with naked feet on the wet sand; "and you will like him so much, Mrs. Glenny."

"Shall I, indeed?" laughed the latter. "Are you quite sure?"

"Quite," was the resolute reply; "for everyone loves uncle."

"Supposing there should be an exception to the rule and I did not like him, what then?"

"I should say you had very bad taste," said Meggie; "but you will like him, I know. He is much younger than papa, very handsome, and a major in the army, although he is scarcely thirty. Was your husband older than that when he died?"

The question was so unexpected that for the moment it remained unanswered; and as the girl noted the pained expression which passed over the features of her friend, now white as marble, she regretted the want of thought which had led her to enter on such a subject.

"I am so sorry," she said; "have I grieved you?"

"No, dear," was the reply; it was a sudden smart here;" and she pressed her hand to her heart; "that was all. He was twenty-nine."

But it was some seconds before the effect had passed away, and then the conversation drifted into general topics as they resumed their walk homewards.

A few days later the Major arrived—a fine, soldierly-looking man of six feet, with a handsome, sunburnt face, telling, though, but too plainly, of the privations and sickness to which he had been exposed in the African desert, but which only served now to surround him with a certain martial glory, thus adding greatly to his value in the eyes of his admiring relatives, and causing Marguerite to worship him as a hero.

It was the zenith of her happiness to walk with him in the King's-road, to be seen with him on the pier—he, as she considered, naturally the admired of all, whom she expected to be regarded by the outside world with all the pride with which she invested him; and when at last the occasion arrived when she could introduce him to Mrs. Glenny, she eagerly awaited the moment when afterwards she could have the opportunity of asking her if he was not lovely!

At first the latter would laugh at the girl's enthusiasm, but as the days wore on, and she gradually came to look forward with pleasure to the morning rencontre when the Major was ever present, she watched with a secret dread the power over her life and happiness which she felt that presence was beginning to hold.

"Are you really going to leave Brighton, Mrs. Glenny?" he asked, as Marguerite had repeated to him her friend's intentions.

They had separated a little from the rest; it had grown to be a custom in those last happy days for Uncle Hersey to monopolise the widow in their daily meetings.

"I think so," she replied, as the warm blood mantled her cheek with crimson, and the lids, drooped over her blue, tell-tale eyes. "I have had a long holiday, which since I knew Maggie has indeed been a happy one."

"I see, and I am the bugbear: is it not so?" She raised her eyes smiling to his face.

"I should scarcely think so," she said.

"Then why are you in such a hurry, and August not yet out?" he asked. "I wish you would stay. Won't you, now, to please me?"

She seemed to be turning matters over in her mind, not answering for some moments, as silently they wandered on, leaving Harry and Meggie leaning against the barriers, watching the performance of some highly-educated dogs below, until, passing the new pier, they sauntered to seat not far from the sea.

"Sit down," he said, "and give me my answer here. Why are you so anxious to run away?"

"Because," she answered, with a gasp, "it is imperative."

Her face had now become deadly white.

"And you say you are alone in the world. Surely you can do as you choose?" he added.

"Would to heaven that I could!" she said, with sudden excitement; but as she noticed his eyes fixed on her she recovered herself almost immediately, whilst he stooped to pick up a handkerchief she had dropped.

It was a dainty fabric of the finest cambric, and as he returned it to her his eyes fell on "Lucille" deftly worked in the left corner.

"Is that your name?" he asked.

"It is," she answered.

"How strange!" he replied. "It is not a common one, and I never knew but one who had the same. She was about fifteen then, now nearly ten years ago; but your face so reminds me of her, poor Lucille!"

"Why poor Lucille! Is she dead, then?" and Mrs. Glenny carelessly kicked the pebbles with the toes of her tiny boot.

"Not dead that I know of," he answered, "though I believe her father would rather it had been so."

"Had she no mother?"

"She had, but she broke her heart, and a year after she left her home she died; but it is a painful story, and one, perhaps, I have no right

to repeat. And so," he continued, changing the subject, "you are determined to leave us?"

"I fear so," was her reply. "In a few days I must return to London. But we have quite forgotten our young companions. Don't you think we had better rejoin them?"

"Yes. But promise me first that you will not run away without bidding me good-bye. When I say that I don't mean a formal shake of the hands, just as you would give anyone else; but I want you all to myself just for a last ramble. You see I am very selfish," he added, as she raised her eyes, with a puzzled expression, to his face. "But you are not offended—tell me you are not?"

"No, not that, Major L'Estrange," she replied, with a half sob; "and if you really wish it I will see you to-morrow evening by the Chain Pier, as I shall most probably return to London the day following."

They had now reached the spot where they had left Meggie and her brother, the former still intently watching the performing dogs, who, having done their turn, were quietly looking on whilst their companion monkey was put through his manoeuvres, Harry the while greedily devouring the *Morning News*.

"Look here, uncle," he said, as the latter, with Mrs. Glenny, now approached, "have you seen this?" and he pointed to a paragraph in the paper. "There was a fearful accident last night on the London and Brighton line, several killed, and over forty injured."

"Is there a list of those identified?" asked Mrs. Glenny, as a strange light came into her blue eyes. "Will you allow me to see after you have finished?"

"Pardon me," said the officer; "by all means, Mrs. Glenny."

And he pressed the paper into the hands of the widow, notwithstanding her protestations that she would have it after he had read the account.

The supposed cause of the catastrophe and the description was only cursorily glanced over by her, the names alone of the dead and wounded appearing to have a strange fascination for her.

Three weeks had elapsed since those days when she became a voluntary prisoner in Mrs. Burton's rooms, and yet a presentiment had taken possession of her that this accident would have an influence over her future, until she felt a sudden conviction that she should read his name amongst the dead, and her heart gave a bound of hope, whilst she still almost doubted her senses as she read the name Alfred Hayes amongst the killed.

"No bad news, I hope, Mrs. Glenny!" said the Major, as, strive as she might, the former could not conceal the feelings which had taken every vestige of colour from her face, leaving it white as marble; but with a strong effort she controlled her voice when she answered,

"No, oh, no; not for me, but I was thinking how dreadful it was for those who, perhaps, last night watched and watched for the beloved ones who never came. It has made me so timid that I feel I shall be afraid to venture in a train for a few days, so shall remain at Brighton for a short time longer."

"Oh! I am so glad," said Marguerite, whilst Uncle Hersey only looked into the widow's eyes, and she knew that he was as glad as she.

The days began perceptibly to draw in, making the long evenings even more enjoyable for the moonlight wanderings, although the damp, chilly nights told that the summer was fast dying away, and still Mrs. Glenny remained.

The assignation had been duly kept at the Chain Pier, and many were the twilight walks taken when, with the Major as her companion, she had strolled by the sea shore, until love had woven around her a mesh from which she could not escape, and with the stars alone as her witness she had vowed to become the soldier's wife.

The sadness which had formerly thrown a shadow over her lovely face had been lifted like a veil from her features until one could scarcely recognise in the lively little woman of to-day the careworn Mrs. Glenny on that first morning when she sailed in the *Skylark*.

"Of course, my boy, it is not for me to die."

tate," said Sir Percy, when first told by Hersey of his engagement to Lucille, "but don't you think it would be advisable to know a little more of the woman in whose hands you are about to place your life's happiness or misery before entering into a contract which you may regret when, alas! it is too late!"

"That will do, Percy. I consider I am quite old enough to be the best judge of my own actions, and have seen sufficient of the world to discern between a lady and an adventures," was Hersey's reply; therefore the Baronet remained silent in the future, only trusting that his brother's anticipations of happiness would be realized, determined for his sake to give a hearty welcome into their family to his sister-in-law.

CHAPTER IV.

THE wedding between Major L'Estrange and Mrs. Glenny a month later was carried out in a very quiet style. A second marriage, Lucille said, was always the better for being as private as possible.

She was alone in the world, she averred—not a friend or relative who cared whether she was a corpse or a bride; so, with Marguerite as bridesmaid, and Harry as groomsman, they were married on the return of the L'Estranges to the metropolis.

London was still quiet, the shooting having taken many away, and it was arranged, after a short stay in Paris, that the newly-wedded pair should repair to the house which the Major had taken in Upper Berkeley-street.

Lucille was delighted with her new residence; the furniture had been selected with the greatest care and good taste, and on the evening of her arrival the feeling of home happiness, to which she had so long been a stranger, seemed to steal with ineffable sweetness over her senses.

Marguerite was the first to welcome her, and as she pressed the girl to her breast she lavished caresses on her.

"Oh, Meggie, this is indeed kind," she said, when that young lady led her to the room which, under her supervision, had been most tastefully arranged for her reception.

"I am so glad you like it," Meggie replied, "and mamma, who, you know, is so much better, has engaged all the servants, who really appear to have done her credit, for they all fall into their places as naturally as though they had been born in the service; the butler is the only puzzle."

"What about him?" asked Lucille, laughing. "Had he no character?"

"Well, that is it," replied Meggie, dolefully. "The gentleman he lived with, he said, had gone abroad, but papa, who knew the same to be true, said it was all right, for he knew his master, Colonel Petro, well."

Lucille, who was busily engaged unstrapping a small travelling bag, scarcely seemed to hear the other's remark, as she became suddenly interested in the contents of the same.

"I don't think it was very wise to engage him," she said, her head still lowered over the bag, "but if Hersey is satisfied I am. What is his name?"

"Hayton," was the reply. "But I won't weary you any more, dear. Here, Clotilde, help Mrs. L'Estrange to dress, as dinner is ordered for seven o'clock," and leaving her aunt to the care of a little French maid, Marguerite hastened to her own room.

Hersey was awaiting them when they descended to the drawing-room previous to dinner, and but a few moments elapsed before the latter was announced.

Lucille was standing by her husband, assuring him she was not in the least fatigued after her journey, but turning as the new butler opened the door for them to proceed to the dining room she started perceptibly when her eyes encountered those of the latter, whilst the colour which had risen to her temples suddenly left her as pale as marble, and she felt her limbs tremble beneath her as she descended the stairs.

To all Marguerite's questions respecting their Paris trip, she gave answers without apparently

paying any attention to the purport of the same, her mind seemingly engrossed with another subject.

"Do you see what you have done, Hayton?" shouted Hersey, as in removing the plate from his mistress, the soup it contained was split over her silk dress.

"I am exceedingly sorry, sir," was the man's reply, "but I think Mrs. L'Estrange will admit that it was not my fault," and he fixed his eyes on the face of Lucille, who, without looking at her husband, said it was unfortunate, but her train was so placed that it was almost impossible for the man to avoid tripping over it.

But Lucille was thankful when the time came when they should adjourn to the drawing-room, where at least, even though she failed to recover from the discovery she had made, still she felt more at ease than when, facing her husband, she had to suffer the insolent, triumphant look with which the butler surveyed her.

The end was too terrible to contemplate, and when Marguerite asked Hersey what he thought of the butler, Lucille was the first to speak in his favour.

"I think my sister-in-law must have been mad to engage a man without any reference," he said, adding that it was palpable he was drunk the first time he waited at table.

"No, really, Hersey, it was my fault; you must not blame him for that accident to my dress," and she opened the piano that she might thus divert his thoughts from the subject.

But nothing could be better than the future conduct of Hayton. He was devoted to his duties, which he fulfilled in an exemplary way, and, far from intruding himself on his mistress, he was so distant and respectful in his behaviour that she almost doubted the conviction of her own senses.

"And who is your correspondent, Hersey?" she asked, as one morning later on she entered the library, where the latter was so deeply engrossed in the reading of a letter that he did not hear her enter as she advanced to where he was sitting.

"It is from a very old friend of Percy's," he answered, "which he has forwarded to me to read—a Colonel Petro, poor fellow, who has written this, as he says, his last letter; but sit down, Lucille, darling, you don't look very well, and I will tell you all about it."

"You remember, dear, I told you some time since how you reminded me of a girl I once knew, whose Christian name was yours. She was his daughter, an only child, but she broke her mother's heart, and through her her father became an exile in a foreign land."

"Was it through her marrying?" she began, excitedly, but checked herself as she met her husband's gaze fixed on her now flushed face.

"Have you heard the story then, Lucille?" he asked.

"No, dear, no," she replied, quickly, "at least not all."

"I did not know you had been told anything; however, that was the case—the girl on whom they had lavished every care and affection, the daughter whom they had hoped to have seen one day united in happiness to one in her own station, disappeared from her home on her obtaining her majority in company with her father's servant, who doubtless loved the fortune she brought him far more than the girl so ill-suited to be his wife."

"But, oh! the misery of those after years!"

It was Lucille who spoke, and Major L'Estrange looked at his wife, as with her eyes fixed on the table she carelessly played with a pen she had nervously picked up.

"No misery," he said, "could be too great a punishment for the woman who could thus repay years of love and affection, and dragg an honourable name in the mire."

"And did they hear, know nothing of her afterwards?" she asked.

"I don't think so," was the reply. "Mrs. Petro survived the blow but a few months, and now the Colonel—doubtless, by this time dead—has penned this, his last letter."

"Good heavens, Hayton, how you startled

me!" said Hersey, as raising his eyes he saw that the butler had entered the room.

"Sir Percy and Miss L'Estrange are in the drawing-room, sir," the man replied, when, with one glance at the bowed head of Lucille, as she drooped over the table, he withdrew as silently as he had entered.

"That man is like a cat about the house," said Hersey, as he rose, and drawing his wife's arm within his own adjourned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER V.

"THE Times, ma'am!" and without raising her eyes Lucille took the paper from the silver which Hayton held towards her.

Major L'Estrange had gone out early, having an appointment with the Baronet, and deep in thought the former was reviewing in her mind the events of the last few months, clinging still to the happiness she felt in her husband's love, whilst the sword of Damocles hung over her head; but as that hated voice sounded in her ears she gave a sudden start.

It was not lost on the man, whilst it brought the conviction to his mind that the game was in his own hands.

"And so you know me, Lu—Mrs. L'Estrange?" he said.

But the only answer he received was a half-suppressed sob, as his companion covered her face with her hands.

"I thought you were dead, Alf," she gasped.

"I thought—"

"Yes, I know," he replied, before she could complete the sentence. "You thought I was killed in that railway accident. Rather unfortunate they should make such mistakes in identifying the killed, isn't it?" he asked, in a jeering tone.

"Spare me! Oh, Alf, spare me!" she cried.

"Why" he said. "Spare you because you chose to leave me, and no sooner do you think that the breath is out of my body than you marry a swell! I wonder what he will think now of his beautiful wife—my wife!"

"Oh, no—no, it cannot be true! Merciful heaven, it cannot be true! Leave me; you know you never loved me, and when my money was gone you hated me," and in her paroxysm of grief she caught the rough hand of the man in her own soft palms.

But as an animal would enjoy the torture of its victim so the latter seemed to take delight in the agony so plainly visible on his companion's face.

"Oh, I hated you, did I!" he sneered.

"Well, there wasn't much love lost between us, I'm thinking," but, with a sudden change in his tone, he continued, "I don't want to be hard on you. What compensation are you willing to make me if I promise not to come between you and—"

"Hush," she cried. "Breathe not his name; it is too good to be mentioned in connection with such as you, too good to be borne by such as me. But Heaven knows I sinned in ignorance, and to save him from the degradation he would feel, to save that name from becoming the gossip of clubs, the scandal of servants' halls, I will make you an allowance of two hundred pounds a year whilst you keep your promise not to disturb my peace."

She had risen from her seat, her petite figure drawn to its full height, whilst the excitement had given brilliancy to her eye, enhancing the colour on her face, which gave such a charm to her fair beauty as she stood like a queen dictating terms to the man before her.

"Humph, two hundred pounds a year!" he said, after a pause, during which he appeared to be weighing the chance he stood of gaining more, or losing all. "Well, that will do; but I must have half-a-year in advance."

"I cannot give it," she replied; "I have not so much by me; but stay, stay!" she cried, as Hayton made a step towards the door. "Yes, yes; leave here to-night, and to-morrow the sum you require shall be at your disposal."

"Am I to call here for it, then?" he asked, significantly.

"No," she answered; "meet me at the top of George-street at five o'clock, and I will place it in your hands, but go now; there's the Major's knock," and Hayton quickly left the room.

All traces of the excitement through which she had so lately passed were no longer visible, as schooling herself to meet the trial before her Lucille awaited her husband's entry.

She moved to the window, apparently watching the passers-by, feeling that not one in that human tide of life could bear the wretched load of misery which was weighing her down, in the dawn of what she had hoped a new and happier era in her existence.

"It cannot be true," she inwardly ejaculated, "but a horrid nightmare from which I shall awake. Something whispers to me that it is so, and yet," she pondered, "can I doubt the veracity of my own senses?—can I disbelieve what my own eyes have seen?"

"Deep in the land of dreams, darling!" and as she turned Hersey's hand was laid gently on her shoulder.

"I was thinking, dear, not exactly dreaming," she answered, as she lifted her face for the accustomed kiss, but when his lips touched hers a shudder thrilled through her frame.

"Why, you are quite cold, Lucille! Come to the fire, like a good girl; and how pale you are—*are you not well?*"

"Yes, yes," she replied, "I am quite well;" but the tender words, her husband's fond caress, recalled to her mind in all its terrors that other scene enacted but a few moments before, and scarcely had the words left her mouth than she fell senseless into that husband's arms.

It was but a short time that the pale, still face rested on his shoulder, but to Hersey it appeared as hours; and he was about to place her on the sofa, whilst he summoned assistance, when a gentle pressure of her hand deterred him, and with a sigh she once more unclosed her eyes, to rest them lovingly on his.

"I am better now, dear," she said, in answer to his inquiries. "I cannot think what made me so foolish, Hersey, but I felt low and nervous this morning. I am afraid I am rather superstitious."

"Why, Lucille, what makes you so?" asked Hersey.

"I had a frightful dream last night, and I cannot get it out of my mind," she replied. "Oh! Hersey, I dreamt that we were parted; that instead of the love for which I prayed from you on my knees you thrust me from you with curses on your lips."

"And you believe in dreams?" He smiled.

"I believe in presentiments," she replied.

"Nonsense, love," he answered, as he kissed her fair face. "Why, what should come between us, Lucille, if all you tell me is true? If you bear for me the same love as I do for you, what should part us?"

She did not reply, but a slight shiver thrilled through her veins whilst still resting in the arms which were so lovingly entwined round her; she appeared fearful of destroying the happiness of that moment.

But the gong sounding for lunch aroused her to a sense of the danger which still threatened her.

"Where is Hayton?" asked the major, as a neat parlourmaid proceeded to officiate at the duties of the table.

"I don't know, sir, but I think he must be gone; he is not in the house, and cook says all his clothes have been taken from his room."

"And have you seen that none of the plate has been taken from his pantry?" said Hersey, as the girl gave her information; and Lucille drooped her head over her plate, that the colour which she felt rush to her temples might not be seen by the former.

"He has taken nothing what doesn't belong to him that we know of, sir; leastways, the plate is all right."

But the man's behaviour was a puzzle, which Major L'Estrange could not understand, and in his own mind he determined to keep a watch that he did not show himself near the house.

Lucille made little or no comment on the circumstance, merely saying she had often heard of

servants who behaved in that manner, and asked if there were any wages owing to him!

"No, the rascal," replied her husband; "he took good care to receive them first, as I had only paid him this morning;" but a knock and ring prevented further conversation, as visitors being announced, Lucille was only too thankful to adjourn to the drawing-room.

It was Meggie and Lady L'Estrange, and of course the news respecting the butler was discussed, the former declaring she had always predicted something of the kind would occur, whilst her mother could not sufficiently express her sorrow that she should have had anything to do with it.

"You had Percy's letter, of course?" she said, after a time, addressing Hersey. "Poor Colonel Petro, he is dead. We had a telegram this morning."

Lucille had just taken a cage from the chain on which it was suspended to show Meggie a new treasure in the way of a beautiful canary, as the words fell on her ear, and the room with its contents appeared to whirl before her, and with a sudden scream she dropped the bird to the floor.

"Oh! have I hurt it, Meggie!" she asked, as with a strong effort recovering her self-possession, she stooped to regain the fallen pet; and then the former, replacing the cage, drew her on one side, that she might tell her a secret respecting herself.

Meggie could not look on her uncle's wife in the relation in which she stood towards her, but as an elder sister in whom she could confide what her mother appeared to have forgotten to understand, and in all her love troubles, or fresh conquests, she flew to Lucille to unburden her mind.

And as they seated themselves within the recess of a window, where Hersey and his sister-in-law could not overhear their conversation, she commenced to tell the former of her engagement to Herbert Reston, a lieutenant in the army, and the dearest fellow that ever lived.

Lucille seemed absent and distract, not entering into the girl's conversation with her usual sympathy, but the name Reston caused her to give greater attention than she otherwise would.

"Do you know, then," asked Meggie, "his father was a captain in the same regiment, but he retired long ago; for, you must know, they are very rich, and have a splendid place at Hampton. But we are all going to a *watine* to-morrow, and you must come—we have taken the seats—and then I will introduce you."

Lady L'Estrange making a movement to depart, Meggie could say no more than to tell Uncle Hersey to be sure and bring Lucille tomorrow, which promise being given she and her mother bade them good-bye.

And from the window against which she still stood, Lucille watched the light-hearted girl as she re-entered the carriage, envying the young heart that freedom from care and misery which was almost breaking hers.

CHAPTER VI.

CLOTILDE was quite loquacious, when assisting her mistress to undress, respecting the strange manner in which Monsieur Hayton left the house; and it was very evident that the latter had been captivated by the charms of the little French maid, a feeling fully reciprocated on her part by the tone in which her comments and regrets were conveyed.

Lucille made but little reply, further than to say that the Major would soon obtain someone in his place.

"But please do not pull my hair so unmercifully, Clotilde," she exclaimed; "my head aches fearfully," as the latter gave an unusual tug at the golden tresses as they fell over the fair shoulders of her mistress.

And, in truth, Lucille's head did ache with a dull, throbbing pain, driving all sleep from her eyelids, and leaving her feverish and wearied after the long hours of that restless night.

"Bring my breakfast to me, Clotilde," she

said; "I am not well, and the Major knows he is not to wait for me."

So the former brought up a tempting *déjeuner*, prepared by the latter himself, to induce her to eat; and to please him Lucille swallowed a few mouthfuls.

"How do you feel now, dear?" asked Hersey, as a few hours later, he advanced to his wife's bedside.

"My head is still very bad, Hersey," she answered. "I cannot join you at the theatre, but you go, and tell Meggie how sorry I am to disappoint her."

"I don't think there is any necessity for me to go," replied her husband. "I will call on Percy, and tell him the reason we shan't be there."

"No, no, don't do that," said Lucille, as she anxiously raised herself in the bed; "they will be thinking I'm seriously ill," and she gave a little half laugh. "You go, there's a good boy. See the clock now. You would not have time to go to your brother's, and they will be awaiting you at the doors."

"All right, as you will, my darling, but I don't like leaving you like this;" and he stooped down and kissed her pale face.

And for some moments after he had left the room—after she had heard the hall door close behind him—Lucille hid her face in the snowy pillow, to shut out from herself, if possible, the thought of that she was about to do, as she contemplated in agony the deceit she was called on to practise towards the man whose love was her very life; but the minute hand, which to her appeared to go round with increased speed, told her that she had no time to lose in the carrying out of her object, and hastily summoning Clotilde she commenced to dress.

"Not that dress, Clotilde," she said, as the latter brought forward a dark blue velvet and silk, the day being chilly. "Bring me that old grey one, which I told you I should not wear again."

"Oh! madame, but dat is so shabby!" but Lucille stopped further parley by taking the same from her hand, which she began to put on, when, seeing the astonishment depicted in the girl's face,—

"Can I trust you, Clotilde?" she asked.

"Madame, Clotilde is fiddle," she replied.

"Then disguise me," was the rejoinder, "so that even should I meet the Major he would fail to recognise me, but be quick, and then yourself conduct me to the street door, and should any inquiries be made, it was the dressmaker for madame, you understand?"

"I comprehend, madame," said the girl. "You can rely on Clotilde."

"Give me my jewel case," continued Lucille, as having completed her costume she selected a diamond necklace with pendant, and secreting the same in her glove, prepared to descend.

The stones which had flashed in her face, as she lifted them from their velvet case, appeared to burn her flesh, as pressing them firmly in her hand she followed the maid down the stairs.

A little pet dog came whirling round her, to be taken out, but a word from his mistress told him it could not be, and, further than that, there was no one to interfere with her movements.

"Faithful Clotilde," she turned to say, as the latter was about to close the door, "and your fidelity shall meet with its reward." Drawing a thick veil over her features she continued with hurried steps to the scene of her appointment, and was just turning a corner in that direction, when the clear, merry voice of Meggie L'Estrange fell on her, and accompanied by, good heavens, Hersey himself.

What could it mean? Where were they going that they were not at the theatre? Doubtless being anxious about her, he had induced his niece to return home with him instead of waiting to witness the end of the performance; and as these thoughts momentarily flashed through her brain the hot blood rushed to her face, whilst her limbs trembled beneath her. But it was too late to retreat now; her disguise was so complete, that although her dress brushed Meggie's as she passed by, they did not give

second look at the wretched creature, who, panting and breathless, was soon out of sight.

The man behind the counter even looked suspiciously at her, when, a few moments later, she offered the diamond necklace in pledge, but in other days, when driven, as she thought, by the same wretch, for whom now she jeopardised her life's happiness, to part with valuable trinkets, she had applied to him, he asked no further questions, but advanced the required sum.

Even Hayton failed to recognise her, and was about to break into a brutal laugh as she advanced towards him, when she silenced him by an impatient gesture.—

"Take it," she said, as he was about to speak, "and let this be the last time we meet. And remember, this day six months the same will await you at my solicitor's. There is the address," and she pushed it into his hand; "but the first time you endeavour to make further extortion it ceases altogether; that is my determination."

The man looked at her, beautiful even in that disfiguring guise, and he knew it was useless to quibble with the terms she had dictated. She was deadly pale, and, pretending not to see that, in his insolence, he held out his hand to grasp her own, she brushed past him with the avoidance she would have given a viper in her path, and was quickly lost in the deepening shadows of the autumnal afternoon.

The tears gushed to her eyes, and her limbs almost refused to bear her onwards, as with a beating heart she once more reached her own door.

Clotilde was waiting to receive her, but her countenance betrayed the danger she knew her mistress to be in before the latter had time to question her.

"Here, madame, in here, quick!" she cried, as Lucille was about to ascend the stairs to her own room, and opening the door of an ante-chamber she almost dragged her in.

"Monsieur came back with Miss L'Estrange just as you had gone out, and wanted to go to your room; but I said you had only then fallen asleep, and had asked not to be disturbed; but, notwithstanding, it was all I could do to keep him from entering. I was so frightened, and I fancy monsieur noticed it, for he looked so strange."

"Where—where are they now?" gasped Lucille, at the girl concluded.

"Monsieur said he would go back with the young lady and then perhaps madame would be awake. So go up quick, madame, quick. I do tremble so."

Scarcely feeling her feet on the soft carpet, as she sped upstairs, Lucille flew across the corridor which led to her own room.

The door was slightly ajar, left so, as she thought, by Clotilde to avoid detection, but as she opened it further to allow of her entrance she stood as one transfixed. The thick veil she had worn was lifted from her face, now white as marble, whilst her eyes, distended in the agony of fear, bore the hunted look of an animal at bay, when, with a cry, in which all the suffering of her overwrought senses gave vent, she crouched down where she stood.

CHAPTER VII.

"CLOTILDE, what is the meaning of this masterpiece?" said Major L'Estrange, as, the former appearing on the scene, he pointed to his wife. "You told me your mistress was asleep."

The girl trembled at the sound of her master's voice, so unlike the tone in which he usually addressed his servants; and it was with difficulty that she could assist him to remove the prostrate Lucille to the sofa on which they laid her.

She could see his face so stern and hard, each nerve twitching with the inward agony of doubt, uncertainty, and broken faith, as with arms folded across his breast he gazed long and earnestly on the unconscious girl before him; and then, as a faint sigh escaped her lips, he left her to the care of Clotilde, and passed from the room.

When she recovered consciousness her trouble

returned to her mind in twofold force. She had an indistinct remembrance of her husband's presence as she entered the room, and in reply to the questions she asked Clotilde she knew such was the case, and that he left her without a word; and her heart sank within her, knowing as she did he would never forgive the deception she had practised on him; and forgetting Clotilde's presence, forgetting all but the misery which made her even long for death, sob after sob broke from her until the couch she lay on shook with the vehemence of her grief.

But as the violence of her sorrow found vent she became more calm. She would see Hersey, and confess all—yes, all—even though it robbed her of his love, and he sent her from him. She would keep nothing back, he should know her as she was—one who had sinned in ignorance, not the false, designing creature her actions might lead him to believe.

Quickly exchanging the dress she had assumed for a silk wrap, and plentifully bathing her face that she might obliterate the signs of her late emotion, she brushed her luxuriant hair from her temples still throbbing painfully, and told Clotilde to tell Major L'Estrange she had recovered, and would wish to see him.

But the Major had left the house, leaving word that he would not return to dinner.

Lucille's heart beat very quick as the message was delivered to her.

"Gone, gone!" she repeated to herself, "and not a word! Oh! Hersey, Hersey, my own, my darling! and I love you so."

But no tears came now to her relief. She sat gazing into the burning coals, whilst a thousand resolves entered her mind. She would fly from the home which she could no longer claim as a shelter; she would renounce the name she had no right to bear, and thus give back to the man she loved dearer than her life the freedom he could legally demand.

She drew her scruitoire to the fire, and with a trembling hand commenced her task, and had written the commencement of her sad story, when, with a sudden impulse she threw it on the flames.

"No, no!" she said; "I cannot write, I must see him and tell him all."

And merely penning a few lines to say she had left his house and where he would find her, she bid him come there on the morrow, when she would be more composed, and would explain all.

Nerving herself for the occasion she once more assumed her usual dress and descended to the dining-room, when after partaking of her cheerful dinner, she threw herself into an easy chair, dreaming away the hours until the time arrived for her intended departure.

A hope that Hersey would yet return before then deterred her from hastily carrying out her object; but hour passed hour, until feeling the uneasiness of further delay, she was about to ring for Clotilde when a loud knock at the hall door arrested her attention.

A fear that some accident had occurred to Hersey for a moment overcame her, and with a beating heart she awaited the coming of the servant who had replied to the summons.

"Some one from St. Mary's Hospital wants to see you, ma'am."

"Show him in," replied Lucille, her fears increasing as the messenger entered.

He was a short, stout man, very much out of breath, evidently from running, and taking off a very greasy hat he twirled the same round and round in his hands in a caressing way, as he asked "If it was Mrs. L'Estrange he was speaking to?"

"I am Mrs. L'Estrange," she replied, anxiously; "what is your message?"

"Please, mam, I was to tell yer to come to the hospital as quick as possible; some man who's dyin' wantin' particular to see yer."

A relief was perceptible on the countenance of Lucille as she heard the man's words. Thank Heaven, no harm had come to Hersey. But her curiosity was excited, until what at first appeared a puzzle became the dawn of a new hope.

"The man's name?" she asked.

"Hayton, mam," was the reply; "he is awfu' bad, they say."

Lucille asked no further questions, but telling him that she would be at the hospital almost as soon as he was, rang the bell for the servant to show him out.

Her face, which had been so white, was now flushed with excitement, as summoning Clotilde she hastily went to her room to prepare for her visit.

The letter she had written to Hersey was still on the table where she left it, but she quickly put it in her pocket, and but a few moments elapsed before she entered the cab which had been brought to the door for her.

"Should the Major return before I do tell him that I was summoned to the hospital," she said, as the footman closed the door.

Telling the cabman to drive quickly, but a short time elapsed before they drew up at the door of the institution; and on Lucille informing them who she was, and the reason of her visit, she was soon conducted to the ward in which the unfortunate man lay.

"I am afraid he's almost past speaking," said the nurse, as Lucille followed her to the side of the little white bed, one of many ranged along the side of the ward where the groans of the sufferers mingled with the last gasps of the dying.

But with a cry of agony Hayton turned as they advanced.

"Not so quick, nurse," he said; "I ain't dead yet," and a ghastly smile played over his features, which but a moment before were convulsed with pain.

"Why did you send for me?" asked Lucille, as the nurse turned aside. "I hoped we had met for the last time."

"Yes, Mrs. L'Estrange," replied Hayton, laying a stress on the name, "Heaven was against me, or I shouldn't be here; the accident which will be my death will be life to you. Do you understand?"

"No, tell me quickly what you mean?" and in her anxiety she clasped the hand of the dying man.

"I—I," he continued, as a spasm of pain passed over his face, "I am not Alfred Hayes, but his twin brother Tom; he, Alf, was killed on the railway."

"Thank Heaven that I am spared that sin! But why," she turned angrily, forgetting in her contempt for the vile part he had acted, for the misery he had caused her, that she was in the presence of death, "why did you endeavour to injure me!"

"Why?" and he gave a laugh, which grated on the ear of his listener, "why, because I was hard-up, and saw my chance, which accident had thrown in my way, though I was as astonished when I saw who my mistress was as you were terrified when you saw your husband's butler. I knew from Alf how you had treated him, the cab and dog life you led, and though I only saw you once, yours was not a face easily forgotten."

Pain and exhaustion for the moment caused him to rest, whilst Lucille, with mingled feelings of disgust for the dying, and thankfulness for the deliverance thus accorded her from a misery worse than death itself, only prayed that he might have strength to complete the tale of his villainy.

"Yes, yes," he said, as he marked her impatience, "I'll make a clean breast of it. I shall die the easier, maybe. I was hard-up, as I said, and when I saw you the idea came into my head how to make money. I knew Alf and we were as two pens in a pod, and you know the rest."

Lucille turned from the bed, as she saw by his countenance that Tom Hayes had but a short time before him ere he would answer for his sin before a higher judge than she; and as he held out his hand, faintly begging her forgiveness for the wrong he had done her, she took the same, and with the words "I forgive you" hurried from the ward.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The man cannot live through the night, madam," said the doctor, who came forward as

Lucille descended the stairs. "The wonder is that he was not killed on the spot. I believe he was an old servant, was he not?" and he looked interrogatively into the face of the fair visitor.

"He lived in my husband's service," was the reply. "I am sorry for him, and with no further word of pity for the sufferer, Lucille drew down her veil, and wished the doctor good-night.

She had no desire to hear further particulars of the accident which had befallen Tom Hayes; all she wanted was quiet and rest from the overstrain which had been put upon her every feeling, and as she once more entered her own room a sense of relief was uppermost with her, when, bidding Clotilde to attend her, she retired for the night.

Hersey had not yet returned, and as it was still early she decided to be patient, but the excitement through which she had passed, now that a reaction had taken place, already began to tell upon her, and when hour passed hour, and no Hersey, her brain gave way beneath her load of misery, and when Clotilde approached, to find her in a high fever, she failed to recognise her as she stood by her bedside.

A messenger was speedily despatched for a doctor, as also to the Major's club, but although the former was in speedy attendance no tidings could be gained of the latter.

"Where is Major L'Estrange?" asked the physician of Clotilde, as he told her her mistress was dangerously ill, evidently some severe shock to the system; but the girl could only say that her master had left the house at such a time, but where he had gone no one knew, and she burst into tears. "Crying will do no good," was the other's rejoinder, adding that he would take on himself to send an experienced nurse, and in the morning their friends had better be communicated with.

Sir Percy was the first at the house, starting immediately on receipt of the message brought by one of the servants, as also in reply to a letter he received from Dr. Bernard, in which he told him the state of the case, and of his brother's absence.

In answer to his inquiries, he could derive no information from any of the household in Berkley-street, and after giving all necessary directions, until Lady L'Estrange should call later on, he hastened to his brother's club.

Yes, Major L'Estrange had left town, they understood, but he had left no address, and a visit to his solicitor meeting with the same result, he returned more puzzled than ever to where his wife awaited him in the house of his sister-in-law.

"How is she now?" he asked, anxiously.

"The doctor gives no hope, and you had better insert an advertisement in the *Times* and *Telegraph*, for there has evidently been some serious quarrel," and Lady L'Estrange gave her husband an open letter in Hersey's handwriting.

It had been left for Lucille, a few words in which the writer bid her good-bye, not knowing when, if ever, he should return. Then followed the terms he had arranged for her separate maintenance, but no allusion to the painful episode which had led to this result.

Meggie was broken-hearted when she heard how near her friend was to the gates of death, and in answer to her earnest entreaties she was permitted to share the duties of the hired nurse.

Day passed day and still no reply to the advertisements which daily appeared, and the spirit of the sufferer still fluttered on the brink of eternity.

Even Meggie, the most sanguine of all, began to fear her uncle would never return to see her again in this life; but that evening, to her great relief, Doctor Bernard gave a faint hope, and at the same time her mother entered the room with a telegram in her hand. "It was from Hersey, who would be there almost as soon as the same would reach them.

How anxiously they awaited his coming, minutes appearing as hours, every nerve strung to catch the first sound of his footstep. But at last it came, and as Meggie rushed to the door,

she almost started when she gazed on the features of her uncle, scarcely recognising in the worn face that of Hersey L'Estrange.

"Thank Heaven," he said, "she still lives," when he would have rushed to the bedside had not Meggie gently interposed.

"One moment," she said, and Hersey, who could scarce restrain his emotion, knelt by the girl's side.

As his warm lips touched hers, Lucille opened her eyes, which for the first time during the past four weeks which had elapsed since the eventful day on which she was taken ill, beamed with the light of reason.

"Is it you, Meggie?" she asked. "Why have you not been to see me before?"

"I have been nearly every day, darling, but you have been so ill, Lucille," said Meggie, as she approached.

"And Hersey," continued the sufferer, "has he come back, Meggie?"

"He has never been away, but you must be very quiet, or he will go away now," said the latter, and she motioned to Hersey not to let her know that he had ever left her.

"Here I am, Lucille," he said, as he tenderly caressed her. "Thank Heaven, darling, you know me now, don't you?"

"Yes," replied the girl, "but let me remember," and she passed her hand, now so wasted and transparent, over her forehead. "There was something came between us, Hersey, was there not?" she asked.

"Nothing shall ever come between us now, my love," he replied. "Only get well, Lucille, my own darling, and we will forget the past."

"But, oh!" and she shuddered. "It was such a horrid dream."

"Never mind horrid dreams—they are all past now, and you will soon be yourself again, my own wife; but here comes nurse, and she will scold me for not letting you go to sleep, so rest, dearest, for my sake," and pressing his lips to hers he replaced her head on the pillow, and with Meggie left the room.

Lucille had safely passed the slight bridge which had threatened to launch her into the abyss, but though the crisis was passed, week after week elapsed before she was restored to health.

And how cold the days had become during which she had been hovering between life and death. Even the late autumn flowers were no longer visible, whilst the early frost settled on the bare trees, and thick fog told that the year was fast dying away.

But the change in Lucille was so great that she almost shuddered as she viewed herself in the mirror Clotilde held.

Her once round cheeks were pale and sunken, whilst her blue eyes, now so large, appeared to stand out alone untouched; and in place of the long golden tresses which Clotilde had brushed with such tender care, a short crop of unruly curls covered her head.

"What a fright!" she exclaimed, as she returned the glass to the girl's hand, but Major L'Estrange, coming in at the time, kissed the white, thin face, and his loving arms encircled her wretched form.

"Silly girl," he said, "won't the roses return with the summer? and a few weeks back you had no hair at all," and he playfully rubbed his hand over her head.

"Hersey," she said, at last, when Clotilde having left the room, they sat together over the bright fire, "I have something I want to tell you, something I have wanted to tell you long ago, but I could not—I was so weak."

"Yes, darling?" he queried.

"You remember, Hersey, in those happy days at Brighton, when you first learnt my name by accidentally dropping my handkerchief, that you told me you once knew a girl of the same name, and she was very like me!"

"Yes, I remember," he assented.

"Well, dear, I was Lucille Petro!" She stopped to mark the effect of her words on her hearer, and, as she noticed a shade pass over his countenance, "Hear me to the end, Hersey," she pleaded, "before you condemn me! I have

been more sinned against than sinning!—Indeed I indeed I was!"

"I was but fifteen when you knew me then, and you, like others, thought, doubtless, I had as happy a home as a girl could wish for, an only child, and wealthy."

"I thought so," said Hersey.

"But to me it was the most wretched, as far as home comforts. Of course, I had all that my station in life commanded, but to love and affection I was a stranger. I never heard a loving word, or knew what it was to be caressed. My father ever visited on me his disappointment that I was not a son; and my mother, a beauty in her day, grew jealous, and almost hated me, as I displayed the charms in all their freshness which with her were growing worn and faded."

"And had you no companions of your own age?" asked Hersey.

"The county families lived at a long distance from each other," replied Lucille, "and my father was too proud to allow me to associate with the farmers' daughters, whilst the clergyman of the parish had no children. Thus matters went on until I was eighteen, and it was imperative that I should be brought out."

"You had more society then!" Hersey remarked.

"I began to feel less the want of parental affection as I was launched into 'society,' as you say, and should doubtless have been what the world calls happy had I not been pestered by the attentions of a gentleman old enough to be my grandfather, and who, I was privately told, had become a suitor for my hand. He was enormously rich, and my father urged, in answer to the repugnance I expressed at such a match, that there was not a girl in the country but who would jump at the chance of becoming the Duchess De Morny. But neither the high-sounding title, nor the fabulous wealth I was supposed to have within my grasp, had any other effect than my giving a decided refusal to the offer of my elderly lover; when my father, driven to desperation by my obstinacy, as he styled it, insisted on his right as a parent to make me bend to his wishes.

"Except the Duke was present I was banished from the family gatherings until my proud spirit was supposed to be broken, and the only enjoyment left me was the morning gallop, which, weather permitting, I invariably took in company with my father's groom.

"The latter was a young man, only four years my senior, and little by little, I found myself confiding to him; the only creature who appeared to sympathise with me in my trouble how I was placed with regard to the Duke. He would listen to me, urging me to hold out, and not let them sacrifice me, as he termed it; and, acting on his advice, I became more resolute than ever in resisting my father's commands."

"Whilst you stood on a worse precipice," Hersey remarked.

"Too true!" Lucille replied. "My father at last growing impatient, my consent was no longer deemed necessary, and I was informed by my mother that every preparation was being made for my wedding, which was to take place in a fortnight from that day.

"A fortnight! Oh, heavens! I thought, 'only a fortnight, and then my girl life was to be passed with this decrepit old monster,' in which light I regarded the Duke.

"I dared not speak to the maid who attended me, as I knew whatever I said would be carried to my mother. Hayes was the only creature to whom I could unb burden my soul, and, with tears in my eyes, I told him all.

"Don't cry, Miss Lucille," he said, as our horses met until he could place his hand on mine.

"And, when I looked up, I saw in his eyes a look which almost frightened me, when, drawing the rein, my horse moved aside, and for the rest of the ride, we were silent. But that look haunted me. He was very handsome, and I fancied I loved him."

Lucille heaved a sigh.

"Will you hear me to the end, Hersey?" she asked. "I shall be happier when you know all."

And as he assented, she continued,—

"I appeared after this to acquiesce in my parents' wishes, but, when the morning arrived which was to make me a duchess I had left my home with Hayes as his bride."

"The first few months after our marriage I was not unhappy; he was so kind that I endeavoured to hide the disgust I almost felt for his society; but after a time I could not conceal my impatience at his ignorance, and when he insisted, lastly, on introducing his companions to our home, I declared I would not permit it, an open rupture was the result; low taunts and recriminations followed, until I could bear his brutality no longer."

"And you left him!" asked Hersey.

"Yes, dear, I was weary of my life, and left London where our home was, hoping at Brighton for a time at least to forget my past existence. You know how I met Meggie there, and what followed! But the worst part of my trouble has to come. I knew ten years had so altered me, that you would never recognise me in the young girl you once knew. No, no, don't ring for lights," she said, as Major L'Estrange rose with that intention. "What I have yet to tell let me say in the firelight, with the shadows of the declining day deepening around us, and your hand in mine, for when you know all, maybe, Hersey, it might be the last time you will hold me in your clasp. Oh! I don't look like that," she urged, "for sinner as I have been, my love for you has ever been the same, so powerful, that it was its very power which made me act as I did, for I could not, oh! Heaven I could not, live without it!" and then, with her head nestled close to his bosom, she breathed in his ears the story of her wrongs, the agony she had suffered at Hayton's revelation, and his dying confession.

They were silent as Lucille concluded her narrative, and then, straining her to his breast,—

"My darling, my darling!" he said, "you have, indeed, suffered."

"And you forgive me, Hersey!" she asked.

"Even as I hope to be forgiven, Lucille, my poor lamb; truly more sinned against than sinning."

“May I come in?” asked a girlish voice, and Hersey, answering in the affirmative, Meggie entered the room.

“Why you two love birds, billing and cooing all in the dark!” she laughed, as, advancing to Lucille, she threw her arms round her neck. “They told me you were here,” she continued, “so I determined to announce myself. Harry is downstairs as disagreeable as he can be.”

“What, you and Harry quarrelling again?” laughed her uncle. “I never saw such an amiable brother and sister in my life.”

“Oh! we are not so bad, uncle,” said Meggie, “only he is jealous, because—” and she blushed so deeply that it was perceivable even in the firelight.

“Because what?” asked Lucille. “Is it a settled matter, then?” referring to Meggie’s attachment to the young lieutenant.

“Yes, and that is what I came to tell you. Papa and mamma have given their consent, and his family are delighted, as naturally they would be,” and Miss Meggie surveyed herself in the glass with much satisfaction.

“Well, Lu, let us see what we can do to reconcile Harry to the inevitable,” said Hersey, as he proceeded to conduct his wife tenderly from the room, followed by Miss L'Estrange.

But Harry did not appear so thoroughly heartbroken at the thoughts of losing his sister as that young lady had led them to believe; and when, a few months later, the wedding took place, Lady L'Estrange was the only one who grieved to part with the bonnie girl who carried with her to her new home the wishes of Lucille and the Major that it might be crowned with as great a happiness as filled their own; and so we will leave them, trusting that the passing years may fail to tarnish the lustre now thrown over their young lives.

Sir Percy and Lady L'Estrange never sought to know the cause which induced Hersey so suddenly to leave Berkeley-street. What they

gleaned from the ravings of Lucille they very wisely kept to themselves; whilst Clotilde, on her marriage which happened shortly afterwards with Hayton's successor, received a handsome dowry from the Major in acknowledgment of her reticence on the subject.

[THE END.]

MIRAGE.

“GIVE me my heart’s desire,” I cried,
My heart’s desire!
But straight God turned His will aside,
Though every separate star I piled
With prayers of fire,
That He His changeless laws would sway
And bend—to let me have my way!

The tide of years ebbs to and fro;
And still I see
God doth His gracious gift bestow
On rich and poor, on high and low—
But not on me!
Although it seems a soul so tried
By patience must be purified.

“Give me my heart’s desire,” I cry,
And still cry on.
I dream, upon a swaying sky
My hopes are mirrored fair and high;
But with the dawn
I wake, still stretching eager hands
To grasp these visions of the sands!

PALE GIRLS.

WHAT can be more distressing than to see a girl drooping and feeble in the springtime of youth? Instead of bright eyes, glowing rosy cheeks, and an elastic step, there are dull eyes, pale, allow, or greenish complexion, and languidness of step, bespeaking disease and an early death if proper treatment is not immediately resorted to and persisted in until the impoverished blood is enriched and every organ made to perform its regular work. Parents do not realise the responsibility placed upon them at the time when their daughters are budding into womanhood. Often your girl is pale, complains of weakness, is tired upon the slightest exertion, troubled with headache, backache, pain in the side; her temper is fitful and irritable, her appetite poor, and yet you do not look upon her condition as serious; whereas,



as, unless she has immediate attention, she will probably fade like a flower without water and die. The only true and reliable medicine to be given to a young person when in this condition is Vogeler's Curative Compound, which is made from the private formula of one of the most eminent living London physicians, who has been, and is to-day, in active practice in the most select part of the West End of London. It enriches and purifies the blood, regulates the bowels and kidneys, dispels dyspepsia in its worst stages, and restores health's roses to the cheek: it averts all danger of premature death. Wise and prudent mothers will see that their daughters take Vogeler's Compound upon the approach of womanhood. It can be obtained of all reliable medicine dealers in 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 6d. sizes, and when taking same their daughters are practically under medical treatment, because, as above stated, it is from a physician's formula. All up-to-date and go-ahead doctors prescribe Vogeler's Compound because they have faith in it, being a brother physician's formula, and it has proved that it can cure in many cases when their skill has failed.

DOLLY'S PUZZLE.

—20—

It was a domestic puzzle that stared Dolly Miller in the face that June morning, when the haymakers were at work in the meadows, and the “maiden’s-blush” roses were blossoming on the bushes under the south parlour window.

“Now I wonder,” said Dolly, standing with folded arms and heaven-blue eyes turned solemnly upward to the ceiling, “if I couldn’t finish that wall!”

“Dolly Miller was a farmer’s daughter. She had blue, pensive eyes, dark-lashed and tender, a complexion like the balsams in the flower borders, and rosy, laughing lips, the lower one cleft in the centre, like a full, ripe cherry. And she was dressed in a cotton gown, with a strip of linen around her slim white throat, and a wide leather belt encircling her trim little waist.

These were the facts of the case. Mr. Miller, like many another thrifty farmer, took lodgers, and this year Mr. Falkner had come from town to finish the last chapters of the novel that he was preparing for the press.

Dorothy did not know what he was doing. Still less did she know that his lily-tall, snow-fair heroine involuntarily took on, in the course of those last chapters, some of her own characteristics. But she respected the lodger’s inspired moods, and never allowed anyone to disturb the papers on his desk.

But during the three days in which Mr. Falkner took his manuscript up to London, Dolly’s housewife instincts got the better of her. She took the carpet up, dusted it thoroughly, and hired an itinerant knight of the whitewash brush to purify the walls.

But, in the midst of the saturnalia, bad news swooped down upon her assistant.

A little girl arrived with the tidings that “Hilly Joe had fall down de well an’ broke his arm, an’ mammy was in a electric fit;” and her father departed, leaving the ceiling half-whitewashed and the floor strewn with brushes and whitewash palls.

And this was Dolly’s puzzle.

It did not, however, remain a problem long. With the agility of a fair acrobat, our fresh, young beauty tied an old sheet around her “mummy fashion,” as she merrily thought to herself, pulled one of her father’s old hats over her light hair, and briskly mounted the ladder to complete the half-perfected job herself.

“I won’t be at anybody’s mercy in this sort of way,” said she.

She was as light as a deer, as quick as lightning; and as the long strokes of the brush swept their way across the ceiling in small, even waves, she felt that “with her own right arm” she was conquering fate.

Until—oh, Nemesis!—who was that outside talking with her father, as Mr. Miller drew a dripping bucket of cold water from the well and slaked his thirst with a long draught?

“Walk in, walk in!” said the deep, hearty voice of the good farmer. “We didn’t expect you home, but you’re welcome all the same. Dolly’s there somewhere, making pies, or brewing pickles, or somethin’.”

In a second Dolly comprehended all the embarrassing features of the situation.

There was but one door through which she could escape, and that fronted the very spot where her father and Mr. Falkner stood.

“If he would only go round by the front porch,” she thought, “I could slip away; but—”

Alas! such good luck was past hoping for. The latch of the opposite door lifted—Mr. Falkner himself came in. Dolly whitewashed away as if for dear life. Mr. Falkner, standing in the middle of the room, lifted his calm regard to the statue on the ladder.

“Good afternoon, Miss Miller,” said he.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Falkner,” said Dolly, with well-simulated calmness.

“Are you whitewashing?”

“Yes, I am whitewashing.”

“Will you allow me to finish that?”

“No,” said Dolly, reddening visibly under the brim of her father’s old hat.

"It is scarcely suitable work for a woman," said he, quietly.

"I am the best judge of that," retorted Dolly, beginning to be angry.

"At least, will you let me help you down?"

"No, sir; certainly not."

As he advanced with the air of one who had made up his mind, Dolly dipped the whitewash brush afresh into the pail of foaming suds, and essayed a new sweep of the ceiling horizon, a gesture intended particularly to express defiance to her challenger. But something in the motion destroyed her equilibrium, or else the step-ladder proved false, for it suddenly doubled itself under her, and came down with a crash—whitewash ladder and pail, long-handled brush and all.

Dolly, however, was equal to the emergency. The very instant that she felt her foundation becoming insecure she abandoned the fort, and, with a light spring, descended to the floor, just in time to see Mr. Falkner, who had sprung to her rescue, buried beneath the ruins of the step-ladder and the whitewash pail.

* * * * *

"Father! father! is he dead?"

"Dead, child? No! why should he be dead?" returned Joshua Miller, in his slow, considerate way. "Of course he was stunned a little, just at first, but he's all right now. And, Dolly, you'd better step in and speak to him. I don't seem to be able to get it out of his head that you're killed. And, Dolly,—"

"Yes, father!"

"I—I wouldn't mind any silly nonsense he may talk if I was you," counselled Joshua, rather awkwardly. "Folks say queer things sometimes when they are a little out of their head, you know."

Dolly understood this caution, a few minutes later when she went timidly into the room where John Falkner lay, bandaged and helpless, on the sofa.

"Dolly," he cried, joyfully. "Then it is true you are really safe! Thank Heaven for that! It don't matter so much about me!"

"I am so sorry," faltered Dolly.

"But I am not."

"It was all my awkwardness," she confessed; "and it was I who should have suffered the consequences of it. Please forgive me!"

He held out his hand.

"Won't you come a little nearer, Dolly?" said he; and she advanced, colouring, and half afraid, as she placed her hand in his. "May I tell you something, Dolly? May I confess to you that if you had been killed I should never have known another peaceful moment? May I say to you that I love you?"

Dolly remembered her father's words.

"Silly nonsense!" she thought. "Well, it may be silly nonsense, but—but it is very pleasant."

"You will try to love me, Dolly!" he pleaded. "You will promise one day to be mine!"

Dolly, in the midst of her flutter, remembered that she had somewhere read that it was always best to humour sick people and those who were a little "off their head."

"Oh, yes, if you really wish it!" said she. "But now you are to take some toast-water, and be very quiet, please."

"You will sit here until I go to sleep!"

"Yes!" faintly consented Dolly.

Nature has wonderful recuperative powers, and scarcely a month had passed when John Falkner, recovered from the wounds and bruises of the step-ladder episode, was up and about.

"I am none the worse for that little misadventure, you see, Mr. Miller," he said to the honest farmer, when first he strolled out into the hay-field.

"Glad on't," said Joshua, with cordial warmth. "And I can tell you, it's all owing to the womenfolks' mania for scrubbin' and cleanin'. There ain't hardly no misfortun' as can't be traced back, more or less directly, to house-cleanin' times."

Falkner only smiled as he glanced at Dolly, who had come to bring the hay-hands a jug of cool cider, and some delicious red raspberries in a cabbage leaf.

"It was a lucky happening for me, though," said John Falkner, meditatively.

"Lucky!" repeated Dolly, with blue, questioning eyes.

"For," he added, "if it hadn't been for that, I don't know that I should ever have mustered courage to win you for my wife."

Dolly jumped up, colouring as red as a carnation pink, from her temples to the tip of her chin.

"I—I don't know what you are talking about," she faltered.

The hay-hands were out of hearing distance now. Falkner could speak out boldly.

"Did I not ask you to be my wife?"

"Yes; but you were wandering in your mind, you know."

"Did you not answer 'Yes'?"

"Yes; but—I wanted to humour you, lest you should get feverish," murmured Dolly.

"My mind was as clear as crystal," said Falkner. "And as for being humoured—well, you may go on humouring me, if you please, to the end of time!"

"But," pleaded Dolly, "I wasn't in earnest. No girl ever said 'Yes,' at such short notice as that."

"But I was in earnest, Dolly; dead in earnest!" said Falkner, his brow growing very grave. "Yet, if you really wish it, I will give you back your pledge, and go away for ever. I take no woman's love that is unwillingly given!"

Dolly sat there, silent and blushing, as Falkner rose and strode away across the flat waves of fallen grass and daisies.

Hardly had he reached the stone wall that separated the hay-field from the farm buildings than a soft voice reached his ear, and it said, in stifled accents,—

"Come back. Oh, please—please come back!"

Falkner turned. Dolly had let her bunch of silver-starred daisies fall to the ground. She was holding out both hands, like a frightened child.

"Don't leave me, John!" she stammered.

That was the end of the courtship.

Mr. Falkner and Dolly were married within a month. And to the day of his death, honest Joshua, persisted that "it was all owin' to women's bein' so beset arter house-cleanin'!"

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

—101—

CHAPTER VI.

Was ever such a wedding seen! Only two carriages, and not a favour; it was more like a funeral.

In the first brougham, Mr. Eliot, looking as grim as death, and his nephew, as if he was en route to execution; in the second carriage, the Meadows' family—Mr. and Mrs. John Meadows triumphant; Miss Meadows, in tears.

Miss Meadows in a plain blue serge, and black bonnet—her father and mother had thrown out hints in favour of a white silk dress—yes, and veil, and orange blossoms, expense no object. It was not every day they had a child married to the heir of twelve thousand a-year, but their daughter put the idea from her with rage and fury.

During the last few days she was wonderfully changed—sharp, bitter and violent, instead of sweet and meek and gentle. The rain was coming down in a soft drizzling shower as the party drove up to the church, St. James's, Caversham. There were no spectators—the clerks and the officiating curate were the only witnesses beyond the Eliots and Meadows, themselves.

Eliot marshalled his nephew to the altar, John Meadows followed with his miserable daughter. Mrs. Meadows brought up the rear alone.

Very soon the service commenced, and continued without interruption. Very soon Mary Meadows found a wedding ring placed on her reluctant finger by an equally reluctant hand. Very soon she found her name changed from Mary Meadows to Mary Eliot!

When the ceremony was over there was a slight pause, the clergyman closed the book, and stood in expectancy of the usual osculations.

No one kissed anyone. The bride was a lovely girl certainly, but as pale as a ghost; her bridegroom was a handsome young man, but he looked as glum as death; he did not once glance at his wife, much less take his wife's hand, still less kiss her. His eyes were eagerly fixed upon the church door, as if he looked to it for immediate escape.

It was the oddest marriage person had ever seen; the only person who seemed pleased was the tall, rugged-looking old countryman, who had given the girl away. He stood a little in the background now, with a triumphant smile on his face, and kept rubbing his horny hands nervously together.

Strange to say, not one of the party sported white kid gloves. The bride and groom did not wear the altar arm-in-arm even; they with the others walked *en masse* to the vestry, and signed their names in solemn silence.

"Maxwell Eliot," in a bold, rather fierce-looking hand.

"Mary Meadows," in a trembling scrawl (though she could write capitally as a rule).

Then came "Benjamina Eliot" and "John Meadows," and the fees were paid, the book was locked away, and the parties left the church.

On this occasion the happy pair occupied the same carriage, the others following in the other; and the happy couple never exchanged a single syllable as they drove to a quiet hotel where Mr. Eliot had insisted on having a kind of breakfast, not so much to celebrate the occasion as because they must all have something to eat before leaving Caversham.

Maxwell sat far back in his corner, his arms folded, his hat over his brows. Mary shrank well away into hers, and kept her face well averted from her companion. In this pleasing style the newly-married pair drove along—only one incident worthy of remark. The bride, as if seized by some happy after-thought, suddenly tore off her gloves, dragged off her brand-new wedding ring, and flung it out of the window into the mist and mud.

To this performance the bridegroom did not make the smallest objection. He looked out from under his hat brim and laughed a short, disagreeable laugh.

He was glad to see the symbol of his slavery cast away—not that it did him much good! He was bound for life—bound as long as he lived to this pretty country girl by his side—a charming creature to flirt with for a few weeks, but to be his wife! A person without manners, breeding, or education, not to speak of money, was frightful—and he had to thank his uncle for it.

His uncle was a straight-laced, Quixotic, old fool, and it was partly the girl's fault too. Well, after this banquet—and his lip curled at the thought of the collation—after this wedding feast he would never see her again—not of his own account, at any rate.

His regiment was under orders for India, and he would not exchange, as had been his original intention. Better to be baked on the plains of Hindostan than to be the laughing-stock of his comrades at home.

Meanwhile there had been some conversation among the elders as they drove along.

"So that's accomplished. You see I'm a man of my word, John Meadows!" said old Mr. Eliot.

"Aye, sir, that you be; it was all your doing, and thank you. I don't suppose person ever tied up a couple that kicked again it more. We had sore work with Mary, had we not, Jess?"

"Terrible!—terrible!" acquiesced Mrs. Meadows, "and only that it's for my girl's good—and good name—and that being so pretty, and so like a lady in her face, as you yourself, sir, may have remarked. I have gone against it. But being so young and comely, both of them, they can't fail to take to each other, though they are so bitter now."

"We must get her educated, Mrs. Meadows," said old Eliot.

"Lex," sir! Sure she's had all that! She can read and write, and cipher beautifully; and her sawing past all you can imagine! and she has read half the books up at the Place, too—poetry, romances, and the like."

"And that's where she got her ideas of love from, no doubt. Girls of her station should not read poetry and romances, and get their heads filled with nonsense and high-flown ideas. And thanks to her readings, of course when she met my nephew in the woods, instead of passing him by, and telling him to talk to those in his own station—and no good ever came of a man like him making love to a lass like her—she blushed and smiled, and thought she was the heroine of the story—the prince of the fairy tale, and swallowed down all he said as if it was gospel. As to reading, writing, and ciphering, Mrs. Eliot will require to know a little more than that. She must learn to walk—"

"Gracious!" interrupted Mrs. Meadows.

"To walk like a lady, to hold herself up, to dance, to get in and out of a carriage, to speak French, to play the piano, and ride on horseback, and to dress; but that, I expect, will come easy to her," he added, with a cynical smile.

"Aye, but where's she to get all her teaching for them things, and she's nearly eighteen years old?"

"I'll undertake that, my good Mrs. Meadows," he answered, with a wave of his hand. "Don't be uneasy. Since I've been the means of my nephew marrying for the sake of honour, I shall take care that his wife does not make him ridiculous in society. She and he are young—plenty of time before them. He is going out to the East, as you probably know; he will be away a couple of years or so. When he comes back he will find that your daughter is fit for any society; that is, if you leave the matter to me. She looks an intelligent girl, and there is something about her face that reminds me of some one. I can't think who it is—" he concluded, as if talking to himself.

"I doubt if Mary will go to school," said the old woman, nervously twisting her shawl. "She's got awfully headstrong the last few days; there's a great change in her, sir."

"Oh, you leave her to me, and I'll manage her. When I can manage my nephew, I fancy I won't have much trouble with his wife—and here we are at the Castle Inn."

The luncheon was such a feast as three of the party had never seen before. There was cold roast pie, cold boar's head, soup, salmon, lobster, salad, sweets and champagne, &c., &c.

As the champagne circulated, John Meadows, who tasted it, and mistook it for cider, said,—

"No! no apple juice, sir! I never could abide it. I was reared in a hop country."

"It's not apple-juice, it's grape juice, John, but if you like beer, have your own way," said his host.

Mrs. Meadows sipped champagne as if it were medicine, and then found it much to her taste.

Maxwell swallowed down two glasses, one after the other.

The bride asked for water. She would not taste a morsel, but sat like a death's-head at the feast.

Presently, old Mr. Eliot whose heart had been warmed by "Veuve Clicquot," rose and proposed the health of the newly-married pair.

John Meadows drank off a tumbler of beer with great enthusiasm. His wife nodded and smiled, but otherwise no notice was taken of the toast. The bridegroom leant back in his chair, thrust his hands in his pockets, and stared at the ceiling, and made no attempt to say reply.

And then an extraordinary thing happened—such an incident as I am sure never took place at any wedding breakfast before or since—the bride got up and made a speech!

She looked ghastly pale, but very determined, as she slowly rose from her chair, and leant her hand on the table.

"Mr. Eliot," she began, "you have had your will, and made your conditions. Father, you have had your will, and made your conditions. Captain Eliot I don't say you have had your

will, but you have made conditions—we part today for life. It's my turn to say what I wish now! I am, as you know, and as you say, a common country girl; still I am a human being, and I have my feelings. My father brought this on us (a nob) and there was nothing for it but you must marry me or lose your fortune, so you would not let me off. Between you all, it's hard on me. What do I gain—the name of Eliot? No, thank you! I throw it from me, just as I threw the wedding ring into the mud," holding out her bare hand. "There, you all see there's no ring there; it's in the street, under people's feet."

"Sit down girl, sit down!" shouted her father. "She's off her head, she's demented."

"No, I am not; and I've not said my say yet."

"Imagine this woman for a wife," groaned Maxwell. "Imagine how she would pitch into me if she got the chance!"

"Father and mother, and Mr. Eliot, you know the deep pool in the woods where the dairymaid drowned herself! Well, if you ever call me by my name of Eliot—if you ever let anyone know of the mockery that we went through to-day—if I ever find that anyone hears I am more to him," pointing a trembling finger at her husband, "than the commonest stranger he passes in the street, I take you all to witness that—that day I shall drown myself!"

Her audience looked at her aghast. There was a wild expression on her face that cowed them, that made them believe her words, such as they were. She was no simple country girl in her teens; she looked a desperate creature of, say, five and twenty.

"As to him, I was a fool and liked him—loved him, adored him—only a week ago." Now I despise him from the bottom of my soul. To be the wife of such a false-hearted wretch would be too great degradation. I go home, and go back to my work. I am what I've always been—just Mary the gardener's daughter. No one knows that I even knew him. No one"—her words which had been almost leaping over one another, so rapid, so feverish was her utterance, now came to an abrupt ending; she reeled, stretched out her hands, and fell forward on the table in a dead faint.

Her mother rushed at her, her father lifted her up, they laid her on the sofa and unfastened the neck of her dress. Mr. Eliot brought water from a finger-glass, and dabbed her face with a serviette. John rushed for a glass of wine, which they tried vainly to force between her set teeth.

"She is as mad as a hatter!" muttered Captain Eliot to his uncle, in a low aside.

"Not she! her feelings were over-wrought, and you can't wonder. And it's all the romances she has been reading, and stuffing her head with."

"Romances have nothing to say to it," rejoined his relative. "All these notions are just the original ideas of her own heated brain—she hates me now like poison. I don't see what has been gained by this morning's work, sir. I must say that I think you have put your hand to a very bad business. You have condemned me to celibacy for life. Though I did go through the marriage service this morning I shall tell all intentions and purposes die an old bachelor like yourself."

"Humph! It's rather early to talk like that! I must allow, though, that I never guessed the young woman had such a devil of a spirit, and—such a tongue. However, she'll come round, and meanwhile we will say nothing about it, but keep the whole affair as close as wax. The carriages are hired, and no one knows a single thing about this business but the Meadows', ourselves, and the parson. That girl's ranting and raving was all to pay you off for the way you treated her. Before very long she herself will be the first to whisper in the village to her confidants, and they, of course, to theirs in turn, that she is the wife of a real gentleman—the wife of Captain Maxwell Eliot."

"Not she!—you mistake her. She has a strong will of her own, nay, I am mistaken."

"No, you will find I'm right, and it will all

come round. I took to her the first day I saw her, for some reason I can't explain. She has beautiful eyes, they—"

"Bah! My dear uncle, you are not going to tell me that they have made an impression on you—a man of your years!"

"And she is a beautiful girl. Believe me, Maxwell, that some day you will be proud of her. Yet—"

"I wash my hands of her, as I told you I would, from this time forth," said the young man, fiercely, "and I never thought it would be you, uncle, who would ruin my future life. It's rather a dear price to pay for a few kisses."

"It's the price of honour, sir," said his uncle, sternly. "What right have you to make love to a girl, and steal her heart, and use her as a toy and amusement, and then fling it away."

"I don't seem to have much of her heart now," said the other, bitterly. "Well, there's no use in our staying here, we can do no good," glancing at the fainting figure on the sofa. Her people will bring her round, and we may as well leave them to themselves." So saying he took up his hat, and without a word or look to his father and mother-in-law, Captain Eliot walked out of the room, and after a moment's delay his uncle followed him, leaving the wretched bride to the attentions of her parents.

After a short time she recovered, sat up and looked about her; then she rose and pushed back her wet hair, tied on her bonnet, and by her mother's commands swallowed a glass of wine, and taking her arm staggered down to the carriage, and was driven home. On the way home she never spoke but once, and that was to say, in a husky whisper,—

"Father and mother, remember that I am just what I was before, only your daughter. If the other is forced on me—if the name is given to me—you know what I told you?—the pond in the woods."

CHAPTER VII.

Let us suppose that three months have elapsed since that very strange wedding in St. James's Church, Caversham.

Captain Eliot is with his regiment in the Punjab, to all intents and purposes, a bachelor. Mr. Maxwell Eliot continuing to open the lodges gates at Dunsford—to wash up tea-things, to sweep and make beds as before. She is a very dutiful daughter to the old people; all her earnings go into the family stocking meat punctually.

But there is one subject on which she will not suffer her parents to open their lips—they are, perchance, silent. And the splendid fact that their daughter Mary is the lawful wife of the heir of Cargort is a secret that rankles in their own two bosoms—no one suspects the truth. Old Mr. Eliot goes past rather frequently on his couch, and now and then has a word with John or Jessie.

But Mary merely drops a respectful curtsey, and beyond that civility takes no notice of his presence.

The subject of a school had been delicately broken to her by her mother.

"So handsome, dearie, of Mr. Eliot. He wants to send you to a grand school at Brighton, where he will pay three hundred a year for you—and excess. He has given me money for your outfit, and I'm to get it at the best shop in Caversham. You are to have music, and singing, and French, and dancing, and horse-riding; and a maid to brush your hair, and everything like a lady."

The daughter made no remark for about sixty seconds, but continued to sit in silence. Then she laid her work down, and looked at her mother, and said,—

"What do I want with education? Why should I have to dance, and sing, and ride, and play the piano? Why should I have a maid to brush my hair?"

Mrs. Meadows stared at her in silence; she absolutely was afraid to speak.

"My home is here—for life, mother; please remember that. Please never speak to me of school again! Remember what I said at the

Castle Hotel; and what I said then I'll stick to—always!"

And so saying, she shut up her work-basket and abruptly quitted the room.

"It was no good talking to her—none whatever," said Mrs. Meadows, a day or two later, as she returned a roll of notes into Mr. Eliot's hand. "She's as stiff as a crutch, and you might as well speak to the wall—or better."

"Well, never mind, we will wait," returned the old gentleman, as he stowed away the money. "After Christmas we will attack her again. After Christmas, she will tell another tale; winter is dull—the roads are muddy. She, you say, has no companions, and she is young. You will find that she will be glad enough of a little change, and will fall in with our plans without any trouble."

But when Christmas was past it was not Mary Meadows who had had a change, but Mr. Eliot, of Carnforth Park. He was lying in the family vault, and Maxwell, his nephew, reigned in his stead—that is to say, by deputy.

Captain Eliot remained in the East, and his agent managed his affairs.

The house was shut up, the horses sold, and most of the servants dismissed.

John Meadows did not openly talk to his daughter of these changes, but he discussed them before her with his wife. He also, to Mary's amazement, put a black band round his hat.

"Why should he not put a black weepar on his hat?" he said to Mrs. Meadows. "Why not show his respect for Mary's uncle—he was Mary's father!"

The worthy pair had many a confidential talk when Mary was out, no longer in the woods—she had had too much of them! She now walked up and down the avenue of the place, or about the great deserted gardens.

"To think of Mary being the mistress of Carnforth!" said John. "Not that it does her no good, she is so contrary. Wife! though she is our daughter in one way it's not our blood runs in her veins, or she would never go on like this."

"Mary has gentle blood in her veins, John," replied his wife. "I've always said that, you mind."

"Ay so you have. But I never like thinking she is not our own—I'm so accustomed to the other notion."

"I often lie awake o' nights and wonder who they were," said his wife.

"Who—who were?"

"Mary's own father and mother—who else?"

"They can't have been much to desert her like that, and never look for her this eighteen year. You have the ring and clothes of course!"

"Oh! that I have, safe and sound."

"I went round the gardens at Carnforth today," said John, turning to a pleasanter topic. "I went round with Campbell. The houses is in fine order, and there's a great show of blooms. The greenhouses is to be kept up, and all the gardens; but the fruit and flowers will be sold in course. The old man had fine savings, they say. Campbell took me into the house, and we walked round. Such pictures! such statues! and carpets!—your feet sank in like moss. There was a lot of men down from London, packing up the plate, in big boxes to take it up to some jewellers, and it just covered the floor of the dining-room—you could not put a knife between the things. And I looked round, and I said to myself—and all of this is Mary's—candlesticks, tea-urns, vases, dishes, tables, cups, and plates, all silver. I thought to myself as how, some day, she would be eating off those silver plates and drinking out of those silver mugs. Ay! I wish we may live to see it—you and I—Joss, and we may die happy."

Whilst her parents were building fine castles in the air Mary was generally roaming about the gardens of "The Place." She never entered the house if she could help it—but surely there was nothing to fear beyond the walls!

One day she had been pacing up and down a broad gravel-walk, in a lonely part of the pleasure ground, and, feeling tired, she stepped into a summer-house that lay a few yards away, in the midst of a jungle of holies and laurel bushes.

It was entered by a passage all lined with lovely shells, also an ante-chamber, and then a circular room, the walls of which were covered with most elaborate patterns in pink, white, purple, and yellow shells. The roof was made of spar, the windows set in splendid foreign cowries. It had taken years to do, and was the work of the late Mr. Darvall's confidential secretary, a curious weird creature, with a broken back, who found all his solace and all his joys in this shell-house.

Twenty years of neglect began to tell upon his work. Damp had played havoc, and in several places large portions of the ornamental walls had fallen out upon the floor. A shell-table stood in the middle of the round room, and a kind of stone seat, with shells in the mortar, encircled the apartment.

Mary often came here. It was cool, private, and a shelter from the elements, when her own home was often unbearable. Looks, hints, and sly allusions had often driven her forth in the rain. Yes, the shell-house was dry, and quiet; and the shell-house was not haunted! Was it not? Then what was this that she beheld seated at the table? A wizened old man, with a thick grey beard, and huge bushy eyebrows, and a hunched back. She had heard of "Humpy," and recalled with a stifled exclamation,

"Do not be afraid," said the figure; "I am flesh and blood, though the people don't think so. Come in, Miss Mary, and sit down in my shell-house, and make yourself at home. I am very glad to see you."

He had a much pleasanter voice than might have been expected from his shrewd, fierce face; and Mary paused, and hesitated, and looked at him doubtfully.

"Tell you I am your friend; so come along and sit down here"—patting the stone bench beside him.

Mary slowly approached, and took a seat on the extreme edge.

"I'm the architect of this"—pointing—"and now and then I come back to look round the old place, and to see my poor handiwork falling to pieces. Many and many a happy hour I spent here."

He was talking quite like a living creature, and Mary began to think he was mortal after all.

"I'll tell you all about myself, and then you will tell me all about yourself. My dear, is that a bargain? You can't go away as long as the shower lasts. I was the late Mr. Darvall's secretary and assistant for many years. I know the place well. People have a notion that I'm dead, and that I haunt it. None imagines I would be such a fool as to come back this way if I was in the flesh. Still I do come back: I am comfortably off. I was left money by Mr. Darvall, and I only live a few miles beyond Caversham; so my coming here is no great trouble—in fact, it's a pleasure to me."

"But why do you come? What brings you?"

"Glad to hear your voice—was afraid you were dumb! I come for two reasons. Firstly, to see my shells, and to do a little mending on the sly"—pointing as he spoke to a trowel and heap of wet mortar—"secondly, to see if there's any sign of Godfrey Darvall or his heirs."

"Godfrey Darvall is dead long ago, and he had no heirs," returned Mary, who considered herself an authority on the affairs of the place, and spoke with much decision.

"Ay, I expect he is dead, if we go by the picture. You know the legend!—and it never fails. The picture fell for Godfrey; but Godfrey was married. It was about that he and the old master quarrelled. And I believe that Godfrey left a child."

"And where is he?"

"It may be she. Yes, where is this child? That's the question."

"It may be dead too," said Mary.

"It may; but it's a chance that it may be living; and I often come over, and hang round, and wonder if I'll ever see the old glories of Danesford Place come back again."

"They were a very bad family, by all accounts," said Mary, severely. "But if they have died out, I'm sure I hope so for me."

"Hoots! This is pretty talking about what

you know nought about. Old Darvall was stern and fiery, but he was honest. Godfrey was a gentleman and a soldier, and a better fellow never stepped. Die out, indeed!"

"Is that his picture in the blue-room, with the cloak—a miniature, near the right window?"

"Ay, that's Godfrey."

"Well, he and his father may not have been so bad; but the others—for instance, Madame."

"Madame!" she screamed. "She was no Darvall. She was a devil, and the ruin of the whole family. 'Twas she brought a curse on us! It was she stole the heirlooms—lace, silver, and diamonds. 'Twas she murdered Claude, her husband—or at least was an accomplice to the murder. Claude's body lies hidden somewhere in that house, crying those fifty years for vengeance, and for Christian burial!"

"Claude haunts the staircase, and bursts open the blue-room door," said Mary, with a little shudder.

"How do you know, my good girl?"

"I used to go and read in the dressing-room last summer, and twice, when I was sitting there, I heard footsteps coming up the stairs, and the door was flung wide open, but no one was there. I could not stand it, and I left off going, much as I wanted to read some of the book."

"It's a lie," said the old man, briefly but simply.

"What's a lie?" demanded Mary, looking at him with angry eyes. "Do you mean to say that I am telling a lie. I'm sure I'm much obliged to you!"

"I mean to say that you never saw that door burst open—never bringing his hand down on the table with a thump. 'It's never seen; and as I lived twenty years in the house, I ought to know—never seen—but by one of the family—a Darvall. Are you a Darvall?" he asked, with a sneer.

"No; and don't want to be," she answered, scornfully; "but as sure as I stand here"—rising—"I saw that happen as I say. I'll swear to it on the Bible."

"Did you ever see aught else?" combing his beard with his fingers.

"Yes; but what's the good of talking to you; you won't believe me, you rude old man!"

"Well, let's hear, at any rate!"

"I—the very same evening that I saw that—I saw something else—a light in the library. I thought it was my mother, and I went in, and in the room beyond I saw two men taking papers."

"Right," cried Humpy. "Quite right. What else?"

"They dropped one as they passed, and I picked it up—but—"

"You quickly threw it down again, when a voice whispered, 'Give it to me.' Wasn't that it? You see I'm a wizard."

"Yes," her face blanching, and she receded several steps.

"It's all right, Miss Mary; that was me. I have the paper I was prowling about that night too. What you tell me, though, about the door seems incredible—inelastic. And you, John Meadows's girl—but an exception may have been made, the family being extinct, and I believe you—give me your hand and forgive me, and sit down. See, it's pouring worse than ever. I hear a man, said to be descended from Fred Darvall, has put in a claim to 'The Place'. It's better than a big nugget; for there are eighteen years' arrears, besides a fine annual rental. I expect this digger will make the money fly—this Australian heir, I mean."

"How do you know he is a digger?"

"How do I know lots of things! How do I know French, German, and Italian—by using my eyes and brains. How do I know various queer stories? How do I know something about you! You are not Mary Meadows, but Mary Eliot. You were married in Caversham, in St. James's Church, last August."

Mary leaned back against the wall, and looked perfectly rigid. Speak she could not. She began to believe that her companion was a denizen of another world.

"I'll keep your secret, never fear. Maxwell is a fool about women, and has burnt his fingers



"DO NOT BE AFRAID!" SAID THE FIGURE. "COME IN, MISS MARY, AND SIT DOWN IN MY SHELL-HOUSE."

to the bone this time, and serve him right ; but in other respects he is sane, and a very honourable chap. No harm in him."

"Except where an unfortunate country girl is concerned," said Mary.

"Well, he never goes very far ; a locket, a squeeze of the hand, and maybe a kiss. After all, young men will be young men."

"I wonder an old man like you is not ashamed to talk so wickedly, that I do," she cried, passionately. "When a gentleman comes and tells a girl he loves her—that he is always thinking of her—what is she to believe?"

"A girl in your station in life, my dear, should never allow any gentleman to tell her such a story. It can have but one end—a bad one. People are far happier married like to like ; their minds match better, their tempers, their tastes. Marrying a milkmaid to a gentleman is like putting a cart-horse and a high-stepper in harness together. It looks badly to others, it feels badly to them. I'm sure you would be ten times happier and more comfortable if your husband was Tom, the under-gardener at Carnforth—a fine strapping young fellow—than Maxwell his master, with his moustache and eyeglass and cavalry swagger."

"Maxwell I detest ; but that other—that common rough ploughman ! No, thank you !"

Humpy, whose real name was Horace Montagu, stared at her in petrified amazement for some seconds.

"Pon my word, Mary," he exclaimed, "to see you curl your lip and toss your head one would think you were a princess. Maybe you are ! You puzzle me ! You know the fairy-tale of the real Princess, who felt the pea through the seven feather beds ; you seem to be just as particular. All the same, of course, you and Maxwell will make it up, and live long and die happy. That's understood."

"Make it up. Never," she cried, passionately. "I hate him."

"And what's to become of Carnforth ? Where are the heirs to come from ?"

"Heirs. What's that to me ! What do I care ?"

"Oh, oh ! So our Mary has a temper ; a violent temper," he said, coolly surveying her.

"I never had that I knew of till last summer ; and I must say for a stranger, sir, that you are pretty free in your remarks."

"Stuff and nonsense ! I'm no stranger ! I've known you since you were the height of a stick. I'm a little ugly old man. My back was broken when I was a child ; a stupid girl let me fall downstairs, and made me the cripple you see. I've no one belonging to me, not a soul ; though maybe if people knew that Horace Montagu had five hundred a year in the Three per Cent., kind relations and affectionate connections would not be wanting," he added, with bitter cynicism. "I've learned, though, I've friends in my books. I've a faithful dog, and I've an old pair of servants who look after me. Well, when I want to blow the cobwebs out of my brains I come over here, and stop a week."

"Where ?" she echoed.

"Why in the house, to be sure !"

"And how do you get in ?"

"Oh, that's easy. There are half-a-dozen ways of getting in to the old part of the house ; for instance, there's a boiler in the kitchen. You have never lifted the rusty lid, of course ? If you did you would see a flight of steps ; they descend to a passage that leads you straight out into the pleasure-ground ; the passage ends in a blank wall seemingly, but there is a door there all the same. That's generally my way in ; but there are several others just as easy."

"Does anyone know of these ?"

"No one but myself, unless Godfrey Darvell is alive—he knows. It was by one of them he came in, to be so very quickly thrust out by the front door. I'll never forget that night, and his father's fury. He hunted him out with his crutch as if he were a mad dog."

"You were there then ?"

"Of course I was there then ! And, thanks to his furious temper, when the old man died

there was no one but me to hear his last wishes, and to close his eyes. Mr. Godfrey was prouder than myself ! There, the rain is over, and it's time you were at home. When shall I see you again, Mary ?"

"I don't know," she returned, as she tucked up her dress, and discovered an exceedingly neat pair of ankles.

"How would you like to come here, say twice a week, and read with me—English literature, French, and so on ?"

"I," looking at him in amazement, "I think I should like it ; but how could you spare time ?"

"I can spare plenty for you—say Tuesdays and Thursdays at two o'clock. I'm fond of teaching ; it was once my trade."

"I must ask mother."

"Why ? Are you afraid there would be any impropriety in reading with a hump-backed man of sixty-five years of age ? You were not so particular last summer with a man of six-and-twenty."

"And was I not punished ?" she demanded with flashing eyes. "No, I'll never do anything in secret again."

"Not till the next time, eh ? Well, tell her, but mind it goes no further. I'll look for you on Thursday at two o'clock. I suppose she'll have no objection. You say you are fond of books, and I often see you mooning about the place, as idle as you can be, looking lost for the want of something to do, and someone to speak to. Now you may as well employ these empty hours by putting some useful stuff into your empty head."

"Yes, it's empty enough," she admitted, shaking it in a melancholy fashion.

"Besides, since you are married to—"

"If you ever allude to it," she interrupted, with a stamp of her foot, "you will never see me again."

"Well, well, I won't, and, mind, I shall expect you next Thursday."

(To be continued.)



"MARY, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU. I AM IN GREAT TROUBLE!" SAID LADY TREFUSIS, WEARILY.

ORDEAL BY FIRE.

—20—

CHAPTER III.

NAN LINDSAY soon found that she had not in the least overrated her own difficulties, and that to procure a fresh situation was well-nigh impossible.

Helen Lester, her old schoolfellow and present friend, was her greatest comfort at this period of her life. Helen was one of those women who will do anything in the world for those they love; she even invaded the Art Gallery, and held a lengthy interview with Mr. Andrews.

It began quietly enough; she told him she had called about her friend, Miss Lindsay, and while not asking him to reconsider her dismissal, she hoped he would not be so unjust as to refuse her a reference.

"I see no injustice in the matter," he said, coolly; "she behaved abominably."

"She must have been useful, or you wouldn't have kept her three years."

"I have no fault to find with her as a clerk."

"Then won't you say as much to any future employer?"

"No, I won't." The old man looked at Helen with something approaching a wink. "That wouldn't suit my book at all."

"I don't understand. Will you explain?"

"Oh, I'll put it plainly. I have but one son, and I brought him up to be a gentleman."

Helen thought privately he had not succeeded.

"I'm a rich man," went on Andrews, "and I'd give all I have in the world to make my boy happy; he has chosen to set his heart on this girl, and I mean him to have her."

Helen felt bewildered.

"It seems strange to wish your son to have a wife who does not love him."

"Oh, the love'll come right enough. Miss Lindsay thinks herself too good for my boy. Well, in three or four months' time, when she has found out what poverty means she'll be glad

enough to give him a different answer. Now, miss, you see why I shall not let her refer anyone to me. I don't mean her to get another situation. There's a good berth waiting for her as my daughter-in-law, and I mean her to take it."

Helen went home to report her failure. She would gladly have helped her friend, but she was very poor; she had, indeed, come to share Nan's flat as a means of economising till she could join another journalist in cheap lodgings. Though a little older than Nan, and working far harder than the latter had had to do at the Gallery, Miss Lester earned a very meagre income, and it came in by fits and starts. Some days she was in clover, on others she dined off a penny meat-pie or a savoy. She had talents, but no genius; no powerful friends, no influences, therefore she found life a very up-hill fight.

"What is to be done, dear?" she asked Nan, when a month had passed and her friend was still one of the unemployed. "Would you like to become one of us?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't," said Nan, frankly. "I haven't the least gift for 'writing,' and I can't describe anything except in a homely way; my funds are getting low, and I feel at my wit's end; but I have done one stroke of business today. I went to the agents and got Mrs. Benham's address."

Mrs. Benham was the real proprietress of the flat. She had let it furnished to Miss Lindsay at a very low rent, because she wanted it aired and looked after, and preferred a ladylike tenant to the usual caretaker.

"And must you give a long notice?"

"She is only living in Kensington, so I went to see her. It seems she left the flat because her sister was ill and wanted her; but one of her nieces is coming home in January, and then she will want the flat herself. She was thinking of coming to explain to me. She was very nice, Nell. I am to stay here till the first of January. She wanted to reduce the rent when she heard I had left the Gallery, and she said of her own accord that if I wanted anyone to answer for my

respectability to my next landlady she was quite willing for me to refer to her."

"What a pity she can't testify to your business capacities too!"

"Isn't it? I went to that new art bazaar and fancy shop at Chelsea to-day, Nell. They wanted some one just temporarily for the Christmas rush."

Nell turned up her nose. She knew the shop.

"It's not half good enough for you. Still, I suppose if you went there for a month it would be a sort of reference."

"They wouldn't have me, dear."

"You mean they didn't offer enough money?"

"No. We didn't get as far as terms. It was the usual catechism. 'Had I been in business before?' 'Yes.' 'Where?' 'At the Art Gallery, Piccadilly.' 'Oh, Andrews'; of course he would give me a reference?" "No. I left through a personal disagreement." "Very sorry," but couldn't entertain the idea of trying you."

"The wretches!"

Nell sighed.

"It's a little hard that one man should have the power to blight my whole future. If I were a thief, Nell, or the most disreputable girl in London it wouldn't be more difficult to get work."

"I should like to have the punishment of Mr. Andrews," said Nell, tersely.

"I wonder what I can do," said Nan. "Nell, you know London far better than I do. Is there any single trade, profession, or calling that does not require a reference or previous training?"

"There's the stage," said Nell, bluntly, "you've a fine figure and a good voice. You might get on as a chorus girl if all the Christmas engagements are not made."

"I should hate it, and it's so near Christmas I expect there'd be no opening. Anything else?"

"Plain needlework—slopwork, I think they call it. I believe if you deposit five shillings the sweater will trust you with a parcel of work."

"Work I could do."

"Anyone could do it; but no one could make

a living out of it. It would be men's shirts at four and sixpence a dozen, and find your own thread or something of the kind."

Nan shuddered.

"Why don't you write to your friend at Southsea, the doctor's wife!"

"She is in trouble herself. Dr. Henderson is very ill. They have had to get a *locum tenens*, for it will be weeks before he is about again. If I wrote to know Mrs. Henderson would ask me to go and stay with them, and—I can't go when I know they are in such straits that every extra mouth matters."

"What a pity one must eat. Nan, cheer up, we must hear of something soon. I ask every creature I can think of, likely or unlikely, but somehow I can't find any niche to suit you."

"I am so glad you are here now, Nell. I don't think I could bear the misery of it all if I were alone."

"I only wish I had not promised that girl to go and chum with her," said Nell, regretfully; "but being on the same work, it seemed our hours and things would suit so well, and it is so cheap."

"Of course it is; and Nan, even if you were going to stay, I couldn't keep on this flat. Mrs. Bingham wants to come back to it herself."

"And you leave on the first of January. Nan, I am so glad we shall have Christmas together first."

"Christmas! Don't talk about Christmas," groaned poor Nell, "the bare idea of it makes me more wretched. Happy thought! I am a very decent cook; do you think any family whose kitchen genius has deserted them would try me without a reference?"

"I think the bare thought of it is terrible, Nan. Keep up your courage, the longest lane must have a turning. Remember, it is only a month since you left the Gallery."

"Only a month; it seems like six. Nell, when we give up the flat, I think I shall become a vegetarian, potatoes and onions are so cheap and so filling. There's only just this one drawback, I hate both."

Nell worked harder than ever through December, her great desire was to have such a nice little hoard before she left the flat that she might send Nan a five pound note anonymously in a registered letter on New Year's Day. To this end she was always rushing about in search of "copy" for smart paragraphs, and so little at home that perhaps she did not quite realize how white and pinched Nan's bright face was getting. It was very near Christmas, when one day Nan had a visitor. The porter's wife came tolling up to see if Miss Lindsay was at home (she had received a shilling for the service, or probably would not have climbed the three flights of stairs.)

"There's a lady, miss, wants to see you. She wouldn't come up till she'd made sure you were in and alone. She says she's come on business."

Nan hoped that the visit had something to do with one of the many advertisements she had answered. If the caller had been of the masculine sex, she might have feared an emissary from Mr. Tom; but as it was she felt quite safe, and told the portress she should be very pleased to see the lady. Imagine her consternation when Mrs. Andrews appeared, panting and puffing very much from her enforced climb.

Now Nan and Mrs. Andrews had never had any quarrel. The good woman had, indeed, shown the girl much kindness, and the meeting was embarrassing to both. Nan could not resent the intrusion, because she felt her visitor's motive was kindness, and poor Mrs. Andrews—whatever hard words she might have said at home about the woman who had refused her son—was too troubled at the change in Nan's face not to feel more inclined for tears than anything else.

"No one knows I've come," she said at last. "The old man and Tom haven't a suspicion, but I always liked you, Miss Lindsay, and when I heard them talking last night, I made up my mind that I'd see you to-day and try if I couldn't put things right."

"You were always very kind," said Nan, "but Mrs. Andrews, there is nothing to put right

Your husband had the right to dismiss me, but I had served him faithfully, and he ought to have given me a reference; by refusing he has taken away my bread."

"Dear, dear. But you know John had no wish to be unkind; he thinks a lot of you."

"Then he has managed to be unkind without the wish."

"He only wanted you to see what you were throwing away. My dear, I'm a good bit older than you, and I know more about men. They are all masterful. Why can't you make up your mind to take Tom and give in? He'd make you a right good husband, and pa would come down handsome."

"It is quite impossible," said Nan, gravely. "Mrs. Andrews, I am sure you mean kindly, but please believe me, nothing in the whole world will make me marry your son. I had rather beg my bread than be tied to a man who has persecuted me in the way he has done."

"Tom was always masterful," said his mother, sadly—Nan wondered she was not angry with her—"but I always liked you, Miss Lindsay, and I thought I'd come to-day and see if I couldn't do anything. You see, my dear, you'll never get another situation without a reference, and a reference pa'll never give you. You'll have to knock under at last."

"If I am starving I may have to go to the workhouse," said Nan, quietly, "but I shall prefer that to becoming your son's bondwoman."

Mrs. Andrews put out her hand.

"Let's part good friends," she pleaded. "I never meant to be unkind to you, Miss Lindsay, but Tom is that masterful."

Left alone by the flickering fire Nan burst into tears. It seemed so hard, so very hard, that all her troubles should have come through a man's taking a fancy to her face.

"I suppose Tom calls that 'love'" she thought indignantly. "It's not worth the name, true love protects its object from all pain, he seems only to want to persecute me."

In crossing the tiny vestibule to prepare tea, she saw a thick-looking letter lying on the mat, addressed to herself, it had been sent to Southsea and redirected.

She tore it open, not that she hoped for any thing good; she found four enclosures, a smaller envelope addressed in her sister's hand, a very business-like looking letter, a printed document which proved to be from a shipping company, entitling Miss Lindsay to a first class saloon passage to Calcutta, in their steamer *Calypso* sailing on January 1st, and last of all a banker's draft for twenty pounds.

Tears of joy welled up into Nan's eyes; in the darkest hour of her life light had come.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT is the meaning of this, Idonee?" demanded Sir Denzil, in an angry tone. "Since when have you been in the habit of complaining of my tyranny to any chance comer?"

It only he had spoken kindly; or if only she had flung herself into his arms, and sobbed out her trouble on his breast, the result might have been different; but childish and yielding as she seemed, Idonee had her pride, and this had been wounded to the quick ever since Alice Grant came to be her guest. It was not anger so much as wounded feeling which made the girl-wife seem obstinate and contentious. She loved her husband very dearly, and it cut her to the quick that he should have grown so cold and indifferent.

"I don't consider Captain Fairfax precisely a chance comer," she said shortly; "and I was not complaining of your tyranny."

"It is not customary for a lady to abuse her guests. I consider you have failed utterly in your duty towards my cousin."

"Well, if I have, Denzil, you have so very much exceeded yours towards Miss Grant that I should say she had no cause for complaining; besides, I do not consider her my guest. She has done nothing but slight me ever since she came

into this house; she has made my life perfectly intolerable."

"And so you confide your griefs to Captain Fairfax? Perhaps he would like to console you for my harshness. He may have suggested you should exchange my guardianship for his!"

Two deep red spots burnt on Idonee's cheeks, otherwise she was perfectly composed; outwardly she seemed much calmer than her husband.

"Captain Fairfax came here this afternoon to ask me a favour. I have no doubt I should have mentioned it to you later, but after your last insult, you had better hear it now. He is engaged to Laura Clive, who was at school with me years ago, and she is coming out after Christmas. He wanted me to let her be married from this house. I agreed, saying that Miss Grant would have left by January. Her name once mentioned, I own we exchanged our views of her."

"Alice will not be gone in January. I have just asked her to prolong her stay till Easter."

"Without consulting me?"

"Certainly; it is my house. You did not think it necessary to consult me before promising to receive Captain Fairfax's fiancee."

"She would stay, perhaps, three days. Miss Grant has been here nearly two months. You propose to foist her on me for another four."

"She will certainly stay here till Easter," returned Sir Denzil. "I have quite settled it, Idonee, why are you so unreasonable?"

She was in very delicate health. She had really never recovered the shock of her last baby's death; and the troubled life she had led since had enhanced her weakness. What Idonee wanted was someone to pet and take care of her—a quiet, happy home-life, not the alternate fits of depression and wild, reckless gaiety of her present lot.

"I don't think I am unreasonable, Denzil. I don't like Miss Grant, and she is very rude to me. Ask any unprejudiced person, and they will tell you the same thing. There is not a creature in Dolorabab likes her."

It was an unfortunate moment for Miss Grant to appear. Left to themselves a little longer some explanation between the wedded pair might have led to a reconciliation.

"Why, Idonee, how bright you look, and yet you were not well enough to go with us to Mrs. Marcus' at home?"

"I hate 'at homes,'" said Idonee, "and I've got an awful headache. I shall not come in to dinner, Denzil."

She knew that nothing annoyed her husband more than being left to a *tete a tete* dinner with Miss Grant, whether he regarded her absence as a slight to Alice, or he thought (he was what, in a woman, would have been called prudish) it improper to dine alone with his own cousin. Idonee did not know.

"Such nonsense," decided Lady Travers, "they are alone together for hours, so why should I put myself out to chaperone them at dinner. Oh, how I wish I could get rid of Alice Grant."

Poor Idonee! Alice was becoming a nightmare to her; but till now she had comforted herself with the thought that three months must have an end, and then she should be freed from her incubus. Now she heard that Alice was to stay till April. This was only November. How could she bear it?

"I suppose," mused the poor girl, "she begged the invitation out of Denzil, and he feels he can't take it back, however much he wished to (not that he does wish it); but if I can only think of some plan for getting rid of Alice, I'll manage it you."

Generous to a fault in pecuniary matters, Sir Denzil made his wife a most ample allowance, and Idonee, who had cared very little for shopping lately, had nearly two hundred pounds in her dressing-case. As she lay there alone, miserable, jealous and angry, her thoughts went back to the old home at Southsea, where she had been so happy, and the sister who had been a very tower of refuge in all her childish griefs. If only Nan were here, Idonee felt her heart would not ache quite so badly.

"I declare, I'll write and ask her," decided Idonee. "I know she's in a situation in London,

but she'd not mind throwing it up to come to me. I'll send the passage money and ask her to start at once, then, if Denzil doesn't like it he must just pay her fare home again, and at least I shall have had a little time with Nan."

The selfishness of the scheme did not occur to Idonie, at home Nan had been her willing slave, giving up anything to do her pleasure, that it might damage her sister's whole future to throw up a good situation and come out to India at a day's notice never struck the spoilt child of fortune. Idonie could only realize that in seven or eight weeks she might have Nan with her.

She was a most unbusiness-like woman, but she managed her scheme beautifully. She simply shifted the responsibility on to Captain Fairfax, as Laura Clive was coming out to him he must know just how to manage, and Lancelot, who was delighted to think there would soon be some one at hand to watch over the poor little lady arranged it easily enough. He wrote home to his agents, enclosing Idonie's letter to her sister, and requesting them to take a passage for a lady in the first ship sailing, and forward the same with enclosed letter and twenty pounds to Miss Lindsay, care of Dr. Henderson, Southsea, then he allowed Idonie to reimburse him, and told her she might expect her sister in January.

Sir Denzil had no more private conversation with his wife; but the breach between them was quite unhealed.

Alice Grant was to stay till Easter, and, perhaps, feeling her position more secure, became more openly rude to her hostess than she had ever been before.

"There's nothing the matter with you, really," she said when Idonie had refused to shaperoen her to some entertainment, on the plea of feeling ill. "You only want to do me out of my amusements; but you won't do that, for Denzil will take me."

"Denzil hates parties."

"He always liked them very much till he was married. Perhaps he hates to see his wife first, and so abstains from them."

"How dare you?" cried Idonie, angrily, "you have no right to say such things."

Alice Grant shrugged her shoulders.

"Everyone knows you amuse yourself. It was high time some relation of Denzil's came to look after his comfort, for you neglect him utterly."

Idonie said nothing—a dangerous symptom to anyone who had known her better. She was perfectly silent till her husband and her guest had departed; then she rang for her maid, an Englishwoman, who had been with her aunt, Mrs. Vivian, for years, and entered Idonie's service at her death.

"Mary, sit down, I want to talk to you. I am in great trouble."

Mary Wells knew it perfectly. There was not a servant about the place who would have changed lots with their beautiful young mistress. Alice Grant was fairly detested by the household. They did not suspect her cousin of making love to her; but they thought it shameful the way she was allowed to treat their lady.

"If I stay here I shall go mad, Mary, or do Miss Grant a mischief. I think I hate her."

"And I am sure I do, my lady," said Mary, frankly. "I've lived in good service this twenty years; but I never saw the likes of her before, and I hope I never may again."

"I must go away," repeated Idonie. "Mary, you know Miss Vivian better than I do. Do you think she would take me in?"

The lady in question had come out to look after her brother's house on his wife's death. She had shown herself very kind to Lady Trefusis at their occasional meetings; but these, with thirty miles between them, were very rare.

Idonie had just wisdom enough to know that in leaving her husband she must go to some one above suspicion. Colonel Vivian was her uncle—at least by marriage—his sister was a lady of fifty, very popular in his regiment.

"I am sure she would, my lady," said Mary Wells; "there's nowhere in all India you'd be so safe as at your uncle's. If you speak to Sir Denzil to-morrow we could go next week."

"I am going to-night," replied Idonie, "and you had better pack at once—in an hour or less

we must start. Until we are fairly off the servants can think I have changed my mind and gone to the ball. Mary, don't try to argue with me. I have suffered enough, and my mind is made up. If I leave this house Miss Grant must go. In common decency she could not stay here alone with my husband."

"Thirty miles is a long drive, my lady, you'll be worn out."

"No, I shall be better. The horses can be put up for the night, and return in the morning before Sir Denzil needs them."

It was ten before Lady Trefusis started, it was past midnight when the carriage drove into Colonel Vivian's compound, and that gentleman and his sister, who had just returned from a dinner party, were going to bed.

"Good gracious, Idonie," exclaimed the Colonel, "my dear child, how glad I am to see you; but why didn't you let us know you were coming?"

Idonie kissed him affectionately, but it was to Miss Vivian she turned imploringly, she felt that in her present grievous state it was a woman's help she needed most.

"Do not send me home," she pleaded feebly, "do please be kind to me, I am so miserable."

Martha Vivian put her arms round the trembling girl and led her to the sofa, she soothed her as a mother might soothe a sick child.

India is notorious for gossip, and rumours from Dulerabad had told Miss Vivian that all was not well with Sir Denzil's young wife, but the spinster—unlike most of her kind—took Idonie's part even then, and now that she had come, and as it were, thrown herself on them for protection, Miss Vivian would not have let wild horses tear her away.

"Send you home, indeed," she said, cheerfully, "that's not likely when I have been longing for someone young and bright to come and stay with me. But you are quite worn out, dear, and must go to bed, when you are rested you shall tell me as much or as little as you like, and now try to sleep; remember, nowhere could you be safer than with your uncle."

But when Idonie had fallen into an uneasy slumber, and Miss Vivian had questioned the cause, she came back to her brother with a troubled face.

"What is it, Martha—a quarrel?"

"I am afraid it is more than that. It seems that Sir Denzil has a cousin of his own living with him against his wife's expressed wish, and that she treats Idonie with every kind of indignity."

"I hope to goodness it is not Alice Grant."

"Yes, it is. Surely, William, there is nothing wrong?"

"Not as you good women count wrong. Trefusis is as straight as a die, but he is just as blind as bat; or he would never have had that woman in his house. Why, her family anguished for him for years. Before ever he saw Idonie the Grants wanted him for Alice, and if he had not had to take that sudden run home because of his father's death, I believe they would have succeeded. Then, coming out, he saw Idonie, and Miss Grant's chance was done with."

Miss Vivian looked severe.

"He ought never to have had Miss Grant in his home."

"No. But I told you he was as blind as a bat. I don't suppose it occurred to him that the woman who had wanted to be Lady Trefusis could not feel very kindly to her successful rival. I have no doubt Miss Grant made mischief; and Denzil, without meaning any harm, was more polite to his guest than his wife thought necessary."

"It only one of those babies had lived!"

"Well, Idonie's only twenty-two; there may be a dozen more babies yet. I am glad she had the sense to come to us. The most scandal-loving people can't make much harm out of Lady Trefusis paying a visit to her uncle. It's rather hard on you, Mattie, but I know you'll put up with it, for my sake!"

"I am very glad she came here," said Miss Vivian, drying her eyes. "If she had gone away alone to an hotel or anything, it might have ruined her good name; now we can just send a letter back

by the carriage, and Sir Denzil can't believe there is anything wrong; while, if he has had a little anxiety to face, I think it will serve him right."

But the letter had to be of very different import from what they thought. Mary Wells sought Miss Vivian at the earliest possible hour in the morning with bad news. Her mistress had passed a terribly restless night, and was now perfectly delirious.

"I'll send our doctor in to see her," said the Colonel. "Carter's a good sort and won't gossip; it's better than trusting a civilian. Mattie, Mattie, you are in for a spell of hard work. There's not a nurse in the place!"

"I am not afraid of work; and Mary Wells is a first-rate nurse. But, John, what are we to do about Sir Denzil?"

"I had forgotten all about him. I feel rather disgusted with him, too. Idonie was such a pretty, light-hearted child! and he seems to have spoilt her life. Well, I suppose he must have a line. So here goes!"

Probably it was the curtest note the genial officer had ever indited.

"SIE—

"I have to inform you that my niece, Lady Trefusis, arrived here last night, and is at present confined to her bed by serious illness. Of the treatment which has brought a bright, high-spirited girl to the mere shadow of her former self, I will not speak here."

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN VIVIAN."

Sir Denzil's worst enemy could hardly have wished him a more painful time than that he experienced between his return from the ball and receiving the Colonel's letter.

To begin with the ball. When he arrived there without his wife he was sensible of a great coldness in his reception, not only by his hostesses, but by his fellow-guests. Everyone inquired for Lady Trefusis. Sir Denzil might be—as his uncle by marriage put it—as blind as a bat, but at last it penetrated, even to his perceptions, that he was out of favour; that his friends and society generally blamed him for coming without his wife and with Miss Grant.

Dulerabad was not a strait-laced place, but it had its prejudices. Sir Denzil had never been popular, the Grants had been (when residents) generally disliked, but Idonie was the darling of society.

Bright and taking, a general favourite, she had never flirted with another woman's husband or lover, had never snubbed any woman poorer or plainer than herself. She was regarded as far too good for the middle-aged judge, who "neglected her shamefully," but when a third person was domiciled in the Trefusis household, and when, though it was evident she was obnoxious to its mistress, Sir Denzil showed her far more attention than he had shown his wife. Dulerabad was up in arms, and the baronet was detested.

Sir Denzil never danced. It being a private ball, he had no hesitation in leaving Alice on a chair near some matrons. Of course, she would get partners presently, she knew, heaps of people; besides, it was Lady Carleton's business to find suitable men for her lady guests. So Sir Denzil strolled into the card-room, and tried to take a hand at whist; but though three tables were set out, he discovered that neither party had a vacant place for him. He challenged an old officer to chess only to be refused. He tried to talk over the last mail news with a knot of men near the door; but the knot broke up when he joined them.

Blind though he might be, Sir Denzil was no fool. At last he realised that for some reason, known or unknown, he was out of favour in Dulerabad society.

"Hang it all, Carleton," he said to his host, "if you knew I was to be insulted you had no right to invite me."

"My wife invited you and Lady Trefusis," said the young earl, coolly, "and did not invite Miss Grant. You chose to reverse the position and bring Miss Grant, leaving your wife at

home. I expect every decent fellow in the room feels as much disgusted as myself."

Sir Denzil stared at him.

"Idonie is at home ill! You don't suspect me of locking her up to prevent her coming, I suppose. I did my best to persuade her. I told her it was her duty to her guest to chaperon Miss Grant."

"Miss Grant was not invited."

"She said she had a card."

"Did you see it?"

"Of course not. I——"

"Look here, Trefusis," said Lord Carlyon, "it's time some one opened your eyes. If you keep Miss Grant in your house and let her openly insult your wife you'll find every decent house in the place closed to you."

"Miss Grant is my cousin."

"Lady Trefusis is your wife. A wife stands first."

"Well, it is hard lines if a man may not invite his cousin to spend a few weeks."

"Miss Grant has been at Dolerabad two months, and is said to be staying till Easter. I am told she declares you cannot possibly do without her, as you find her companionship essential to your happiness."

"It's a lie."

Lord Carlyon shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps it is also a lie, when Miss Grant informs everyone that but for your journey to England she would have been your wife instead of the present Lady Trefusis. If it is true, it is an insult to your wife to ask her to receive your discarded sweetheart as her guest."

"I think I'll go home," said Trefusis. "I won't quarrel with you, Carlyon, you have been deceived."

"Then so has everyone else at Dolerabad. Just ask Miss Grant how many partners she has had to-night. I know it was settled at the club that if she showed herself here without Lady Trefusis not a man would dance with her."

Sir Denzil made his way back to the ball-room.

"I think I will order the carriage, Alice. It is getting late, and I do not care for Idonie to be alone so many hours."

"Oh, we had better stay till supper. I haven't danced once yet."

"I will order the carriage," said Sir Denzil. He did not care to tell her his conviction that no man would take her into the supper-room, and that nothing would induce him, after what he had just heard, to appear there with her himself.

Sir Denzil shook hands with Lady Carlyon, who, in a voice audible through the room, sent "her love to his wife."

The Countess did not seem to see Miss Grant's outstretched hand. She looked straight past the young lady as though unconscious of her very existence.

"The Carlys are odious," said Miss Grant, as they drove home. "I never was at a more hateful ball. Why, no one asked me to dance once. I call it a great slight to you in your position."

Sir Denzil looked at her gravely. Was it possible he had been deceived, and Alice had not been invited?

"I think there was some mistake," he said, gravely. "Lord Carlyon told me you had not received a card for the ball, and therefore his wife resented your coming."

"Of course I did not receive a separate card," said Alice, who was far too clever to tell needless lies; "but Idonie is so intimate with Lady Carlyon she was quite at liberty to take me as her guest."

"Only Idonie did not take you."

"Well, you did, and husband and wife are one. Of course," after a little pause, "I know I have Idonie to thank for the slights I received. She is so absurdly jealous of me she tries to set her friends against me; but so long as you are true to me, Denzil, I don't care."

Denzil was painfully conscious that he did not like this way of talking at all.

"When you came here, Alice, I thought you would be a nice companion for my wife. I asked you to prolong your visit in the same belief; but from your words it is clear that you and Idonie

are not friendly. Your position in a house cannot be pleasant if you are antagonistic to its mistress, so I think it would be better if you went home next week."

Alice felt furious; but she had no mind to give in yet.

"You forget how much you depend on me for your little comforts Cousin Denzil. Idonie is so taken up with gaiety she has no time to devote to you."

"I must take my chance of that!" said Sir Denzil, bluntly. "As my kinswoman, I won't expose you to a repetition of to-night's treatment. If we can't find a suitable escort for you, I will get Idonie to send her maid home with you. Wells has been ten years in India and is used to travelling."

He went straight to his wife's room, meaning to tell her he had arranged for Alice to leave them as soon as possible. But the pretty white bed was empty. An awful fear seized on him. He went back to the drawing-room and rang the bell.

"Send Wells to me!" he said to the servant, his own man, the only white domestic except Wells.

"She left, Sir Denzil, about ten."

"Left! But my wife was devoted to her."

"She left in attendance on my lady, Sir Denzil. The carriage started about ten. Lady Trefusis charged me to tell you she would send it back early in the morning, before you would want it."

Sir Denzil went back to his wife's room. Surely if she had deserted him, she had left at least a farewell message.

He found it at last.

"You are very cruel to me, and you let your cousin insult me continually. I will not share my home with her, so I have gone away."

"IDONIE"

Sir Denzil passed a sleepless night. The first light in the morning he rode off to consult his oldest friend, a banker, whose compound was three miles distant from his own.

If Sir Denzil expected Mr. Marchment to reassure him he was disappointed. The banker, a crusty old bachelor, happened to have been very much attracted to Idonie, while he regarded Miss Grant (who had tried to captivate him) with marked aversion.

"It serves you right!" he said, frankly. "If Lady Trefusis had had a father or brother at hand, you would not have dared to neglect her!"

"I never neglected her. Marchment, you know I was devoted to her."

"Well, you took a queer way of showing it, then. I'm sure all Dolerabad would say you were devoted to your cousin."

"Then you won't help me to find Idonie?"

"She's probably gone to some friend at a little distance. Wait till the carriage comes back, and question the driver."

"And that is your advice?"

"Yes. I'll give you another piece, if you like. When the carriage returns give it another job, let it take Miss Grant on the first stage of her journey from Dolerabad."

Sir Denzil returned home, almost worn out with anxiety. Alice met him on the threshold.

"What terrible news I have heard! Idonie has actually left her home—shocking! I suppose Captain Fairfax is at the bottom of her shameless conduct?"

"I'll trouble you to use different words in speaking of my wife!" said Sir Denzil, sternly. "Idonie is visiting friends. She has left her home because she positively refuses to share that home with you. Therefore I must beg you to pack up at once!"

"You will send me away!"

"I have no choice in the matter," he said, grimly. "Mrs. Grundy rules paramount here; and if you stayed in my house now my wife has left me you would lose your good name."

Alice looked at him intently.

"Would that matter? You could get a divorce, and then——"

"Silence!" thundered Sir Denzil. "I won't hear such base slander of my wife! And, let me tell you this, Alice, if I were free to marry again to-morrow, I shouldn't make you Lady Trefusis."

The immaculate Andrew interrupted them.

"The carriage has returned, Sir Denzil; Colonel Vivian sends you this letter."

"Her uncle!" breathed Trefusis, as the man departed. "Fool that I was to doubt Idonie for an instant; of course she has gone to him!"

But when he read the letter the feeling of relief left him and was replaced by one of great anxiety.

Idonie seriously ill! Idonie, who had parted from him in anger. At that moment Sir Denzil knew the truth—he loved his wife better than anything on earth, and if she died happiness for him was ended.

(To be continued.)

THE OLD BOATSWAIN'S ERROR.

—201—

THE ghostly-looking albatross, riding the sea with stately crest, stared at the ship as she dashed through the cold waves on her course. Whole flocks of sea-crows frequently circled about our masts. Now and then, driven by adverse winds near the coast, we beheld thousands of seals, whose weird, unearthly howling blended with the roar of the surges on the rocks. We were approaching Cape Horn, and as we drew every day nearer that dreaded locality, the young green hands amongst the crew began to show symptoms of what the old sailors facetiously termed the Cape Horn fever. One after another of these youngsters took to his bunk, shivering as if with an attack of ague, and remained rolled up in blankets until the first officer dosed them all with salts, and then, insisting that they were cured, forced them to return to duty.

As second officer of the *Cumberland*—such was the ship's name—it was often my place to see that the complainants did not shirk the tasks imposed upon them. My natural experience having convinced me that the disease of Cape Horn fever was often merely imaginary, I used every effort to impress this truth upon the minds of the young sailors. As I treated them kindly, all except one seemed disposed to give up the foolish notion that they were too ill to brave the chilling cold and the tempestuous winds of the blustery old Cape. The exception I mention was a slender youth of sixteen—the son of Tom Saunders, our boatswain, who numbered besides his wife and two sons a perfect sea-dog, willing and ready to perform his duty on all occasions. Poor Tom, however, had one weakness—an overweening fondness for his boy rendering him blind to one of the lad's most serious faults. I can imagine I see him now—that dreamy, thoughtful Will Saunders, so fond of reading and study, always, from sheer distaste for manual labour, placing himself at the tall end of a rope when a sail was to be hauled down, in order that the men in front of him might lay out to furl it, and he have the luxury of being left behind on deck.

Whenever I spoke to his father on the subject the old boatswain's temper would seem to mount aloft to the very tip of his brain.

"Hark ye, sir," he said to me on one of those occasions, "he's got too many chips from my hulk in him to be a shirk, so if he hangs back at times it's because he knows that them that's had more experience than him can furl sail better. I tell you he'll make a commodore yet, for he was always a-readin' of naval heroes and such like. Ay, ay, shiver me if I didn't see a second Paul Jones in him once when he sung to me them beautiful lines,—

"Our gunner in 'fright to Paul Jones he came—"

"Our ship is a-sinkin', our shrouds are in flame."

Then Paul Jones he cried, in the height of his pride,

"If we cannot do better, men, we'll sink alongside." Will Saunders, insisting that he had the Cape Horn fever, sadly neglected his duties. The captain, a good-natured man, forebore treating him harshly, but insisted on his being kept on deck.

"If the boy says he is ill, he is," the boatswain remarked to me one day. "I asked the captain to let him go below, but he only shook his head, and commenced talkin' about that Indian shawl which his wife had been a-longin' for ever since she saw me take it out of my donkey (chest), and hang it up for an airin'. I got that shawl, as you know, from a native, for five pounds of 'baccy. I've been thinkin' I'd save it for Will's wife, if he ever got spliced, but now I've made up my mind to sell it to the captain for his wife, and p'raps that'll influence her to speak a good word for my boy, and persuade the skipper to let him stay below while he's ill."

I walked away shrugging my shoulders, for I knew that Will was not sick, but only pretending to be so.

That very day old Tom sold the Indian shawl to the captain while his wife and he were on deck, and it would have done you good to see how the eyes of the pretty woman sparkled as she held up the garment in all sorts of positions, and then alternately put it on and off her beautiful shoulders, and, lastly, laid it on one knee, and commenced to smooth it as if it was a pet kitten. It was really a magnificent article, of fine and glossy fabric, strong, closely woven, as soft as silk, and well fitting the shapely woman to whom it now belonged.

After the pleased captain had for awhile witnessed his fair partner's appreciation of his gift, he went below.

Then up steps old Tom Saunders to the skipper's wife, takes off his Scotch cap, bows, scrapes his foot, rolls his quid of tobacco far back against his cheek, and says, respectfully,—

"Ma'am, here's hopin' that that ere shawl will remind you to try and persuade Captain Benson to let my boy, who is ill, stow himself in the fo'castle till he gets well."

Mrs. Benson looked at the speaker rather coldly. Her large, dark, almond-shaped eyes seemed to go through him like needles. He drew back abashed, and began to pull at his grey forelock. Then, as if inspired by a sudden thought, he continued,—

"Tell you what I'll do, ma'am. I'll give the captain back half the money he paid me for the shawl if you'll persuade him to let the lad stay below, and many thanks to you, ma'am."

Mrs. Benson looked indignant at what she deemed an attempt to bribe her, but the eager, wistful expression of Tom's weather-beaten visage soon convinced her that the proposal was the result of the almost childish simplicity of his nature.

She gently declined his offer; said that the captain had told her that the boy was not sick at all; and she added that her husband required no persuasion to perform his duty, but always did what was right; whereupon the old tar, deeply grieved for his son's sake, bowed and withdrew.

Two days later we were off Cape Horn. The dark, leaden-coloured sky, and the cold head-winds did not keep Mrs. Benson below. She was on deck in all weathers, wearing her warm Indian shawl, and now and then glancing at the dim reflection of her superb form in the cabin window.

"Ay!" muttered old Tom to himself, on one of those occasions, "I s'pose as it's the way with 'em all, and it may be wrong of me, but I heartily wish I hadn't sold the captain that shawl for her, since she won't speak a good word for my boy. Avast there, though; I mustn't growl about it. It ain't her fault that she's just as she's made—jest fit to wear Indian shawls, and admire herself in 'em, without a thought of a poor lad who is ill."

Just then one of those sudden squalls common to this fickle climate came howling and thundering down upon the ship.

The sea roared like an old lion, and the wind blew great guns. For an instant the craft lay nearly on her beam-ends, while orders to clew up and furl rang fore and aft.

As the men went aloft the force of the gale blew them almost flat against the shrouds.

"Lively, lads!" shouted Captain Benson through his trumpet.

With a report like a cannon, the fore-topgallant

torn from the yards, collapsed, and went spinning upward into the rack of the squall.

There was a sort of "cross sea"—one of the most perilous peculiarities of the Cape Horn waters—and now and then the low-hulled ship, with a heavy lurch, would plunge bows under, and lie for moments as if she would never get up, leaving the slatting canvas completely at the mercy of the winds.

Fearing that the jibes would be blown from the boom, the captain was in a hurry to have them furled.

"Here, you, Will Saunders, where are you?" he roared, as the boy sprang from the lee of the galley. "Away you go, and help furl the jib. Don't you see there is only one man out there?"

"I'm ill, sir," cried Will.

The captain smiled grimly, for the nimbleness shown by the lad in getting behind the galley indicated his perfect fitness for duty.

"Come, away you go!" was the sternly reiterated order, and the boy sulkily obeyed.

The man out on the boom before him was a Lascar—a lithe, supple, cat-like fellow—of wonderful activity. He had run out on the foot-rope like a flash, thus avoiding being dipped under water during the ship's plunges, and by dodging the slatting canvas had escaped being knocked overboard.

Will Saunders might have done the same, but shrinkingly he felt his way like a cripple; and the captain, who now foresaw what must happen, was about to call him back, when a tremendous plunge of the ship buried the lad under water. Far upward the bow swung again, showing the boy high in the air, gasping for breath, as with trembling fingers he clung to the boom.

Frightened by his cold bath, by the suffocating spray flying around him, by the wind, screaming like a fiend of doom in his ears, and still more by the canvas now ballying out from the spar against his face, and almost pushing him off, he gave a wild cry of terror.

His father, who was aloft on the foreyard, heard and saw him. He had just finished supervising the furling of the foretopgallant, and now, in spite of his years, the old tar, seizing the forestay, slid down like lightning towards his beloved boy.

But scarce had his feet touched the staysail boom when he heard the second despairing cry of Will, as a violent slate of the canvas knocked the lad from the yard.

The old boatswain bounded like a lion to the deck.

"Quick, for Heaven's sake!" he roared to the captain and me.

We had been standing amidships, and we now saw Will Saunders, who had fallen clear of the bows to windward, come up under the counter, near the mizzen chains. The ship had just made another of her plunges, remaining, for a few seconds, without headway, in the cross-sea, and this had enabled the boy to hold on to a thin piece of clothes-line, dangling from the chains, and merely wound about one of them without being fastened to it. As a consequence, the thin rope was slipping off the iron bar as the lad held to it; and as the craft was again about to go spinning on her way, we felt sure that the youth would be left astern, with the line in his hands, and would be lost, for it was too rough to lower a boat.

We rushed "afterward," but we knew we would not be in time to save the boy, especially as all the ropes were now entangled, and in confusion.

The captain's wife, in spite of the peril she incurred from the seas sweeping over the rail, had sprung from the shelter of the companion way when she heard Will Saunders fall; and now, as the ship swung off, and the wind was brought astern, we saw the brave woman, with a movement as quick as thought, take off her Indian shawl, and, dropping the lower part overboard, tie the other end to the mizzen shrouds.

Just then, a rush of water sweeping the deck compelled her to cling to the shrouds to escape being washed into the sea, but, the next moment, the voice of the noble woman rang clearly above the roar of the wind, which had slightly abated.

"He holds to it! Quick, and he can be saved!"

Active as we were, old Tom, in spite of his age, somehow got ahead of us, and, swinging himself over the side into the chains, his iron hand gripped the boy's collar.

From the shawl, to which he had clung, Will was lifted to the deck; and now it seemed as if the grateful old tar would never tire of thanking Mrs. Benson for saving his son, nor stop asking her pardon.

"Pardon for what?" she inquired.

"Why, do you see," replied Tom, "when you didn't speak a good word for my sick boy, I was sorry I sold that shawl to the captain for you; and I made up my mind as you was good for nothin' except wearin' Indian shawls and the like, and admirin' yourself in them. Now I ask pardon for the mistake I made. You've proved your self a heron (heroine), ma'am; you've done my boy and me the greatest kindness, and I'm glad enough I let the skipper have the shawl for you."

"Yes, father," cried Will, "for that shawl was the means of saving my life; and let me now own that Mrs. Benson was right about my not being ill, for I was not ill at all."

The affair served as a sort of lesson to the boy. The pluck and coolness shown by the woman who had saved his life made him ashamed of his lack of hardihood, and, from that moment he emulated his father in performing his duty on every occasion.

Eventually he commanded a fine ship, and he is now prospering in the East Indies trade.

[THE END.]

We are informed by the National Art Society, 10, Lancaster Place, Strand, London, W.C., that they are still open to supply any of their handsome prints of celebrated pictures advertised in our Christmas Number, so if any of our readers care to avail themselves of the offer they had better apply at once, enclosing coupons cut from wrapper of Christmas Number.

A CHEAP AND RELIABLE SEWING MACHINE.—The very high prices that have been asked for thoroughly good and reliable sewing machines have done more to flood the market with cheap and inferior machines than was probably at all contemplated; but, fortunately, no one need now pay a higher price than they can conveniently afford for a good machine, for one of the best may be bought for the reasonable price of 39s. cash, or two guineas in monthly instalments of 5s. This capital sewing machine is the Atlas "B," which may be obtained from the Atlas Sewing Machine Company, 184, High Street, Camden Town, N.W. It is a hand lock-stitch machine, most carefully finished in every part, and having all such improvements as self-threading shuttle, self-winding, &c.; it works easily and will do every kind of plain and ornamental sewing, a full set of attachments for all descriptions of work being included in the original price. A month's trial is allowed, for which a deposit of 5s. only is made, and a *guarantee for four years* is given with each machine, which is rigidly tested before it is sent out. For heavier work, such as that of a dressmaker, or a house in which a great deal of dressmaking is done at home, it might be advisable to select a stronger machine, such as the Atlas "A" of the same company. The price of this is only £2 10s. complete, or £2 15s. if paid for in monthly instalments of 5s. A more dainty and ornamental machine is "The Superior" No. 1, a beautifully finished sewing machine with cover complete, costing £2 16s.; a still more elaborately ornamented machine of the same class costs £3 10s., and either of these can be secured on the monthly payment system. A book of instructions is sent with each machine, and the construction and working being so simple no further guide is necessary. We have very great pleasure in recommending these Atlas sewing machines to our readers, believing them to be invaluable, both on account of their excellence and their extreme cheapness.

IF I BUT KNEW.

CHAPTER IV.

The crash of the music, the hum of voices, and the song of the rippling fountains seemed to dazzle Rhoda's senses.

"Promise me that you will marry me, my darling!" cried the impetuous lover. "Would it be so very difficult, Rhoda?" he whispered.

She clung to him; the terror deepening in her eyes.

"This is a little romance all our own," he added, clasping her closely. "Rhoda let me kiss you." He clasped his arms around her and drew her to his breast. "You are mine in life, mine in death, and mine through all eternity."

He kissed the sweet lips over and over again.

She did not shrink at last from his passionate caresses. There was something of the sublime abandonment of love in the lovely young face which she raised to him.

"They would try to part us if they knew it, Rhoda," he cried; "but they must not do it. I have only lived since I knew you, my darling. I would die if they took you from me."

She was so young that she believed him.

The very thought of this fair, handsome lover dropping and dying for love of her was more than she could bear.

She clasped her little white arms about him, and when she did that, Kenward Monk told himself that the battle was won. He realized how quickly time was passing.

"They will try to take you from me if they know of our love. They will say I am no match for you. Oh, heavens, my darling! how I wish you were the poorest girl in the world, that I might show you how I would love and cherish, and guard you then just as dearly as I do now."

He could not understand the smile that, like a gleam of sunshine, broke over her face, making it fair and radiant.

"The Calms will forgive us when they once find out how dearly we love each other," she added.

"Not now, my darling," he whispered. "You shall tell them as much as you like after."

He kept to himself that the moments she spent in talking of them would be worse than lost time, for he knew all about them; he had inquired diligently in regard to their wealth, and he had it all down to a fine point.

"Let us be married first, then we can talk over all these things after," he exclaimed, impulsively.

She was dazed by his passionate words.

He felt quite sure that this sweet, beautiful, dainty young girl could not hold out against him if he only persisted.

One more bold stroke, and the heiress would be his.

There would be a scene, he well knew, when he brought the young girl back to the old folks. But it would surely end by their forgiving her. They could not hold out against her very long.

"You are—sure—it—it would be right, Mr. Monk!" she faltered.

"You must not call me 'master,' sweet one," he cried. "To you I shall be 'Kenward' from now on to eternity. Let me manage this affair, my darling," he added.

All power of resistance seemed swallowed up by his indomitable will.

"Go to the cloak-room, my love," he whispered, "and change your attire as quickly as you can. I will meet you at the fountain nearest the entrance. Not one word to either of your friends, Rhoda," he said, warningly. "Promise me that."

There was no crossing him. Indeed, the very power to even think for herself seemed to have left her.

Like one in a dream, Rhoda donned her street clothes, the thoughts filling her mind of what Ruth and Nims would say when it was unmistakable that she came to look for her. How startled they would be.

Her whole frame shook. She was like one in a strange dream. Before she had time to think, her lover clasped her hand in his.

"We have no time to lose, my darling," he said.

Laying the little white hand on his arm, he walked quickly through the brilliantly lighted rooms.

"If anyone speaks to you," he whispered, "do not answer, lest your voice betray you. I will do the talking."

Indeed, she could not have uttered a word to have saved her life. A strange chill seemed to seize her. It seemed to her that it would have been as easy to resist the tide of a raging sea, or the force of a whirlwind, as to resist the eager, handsome lover by her side.

White, faint and trembling, she seemed to be carried forward by a force quite foreign to herself. If Ruth or Nims had met her suddenly, and had asked her whither she was going, she would have been at a loss what answer to give.

He led her through one of the side passages, out into the entrance hall, where, among the other arrivals and departures, they were not noticed. Still holding her hand tightly clasped in his own, he led her boldly past the doorkeepers. They did not stop him, though one of them looked at him with a puzzled face.

Outside all was confusion. There was a great crush of carriages, the babble of coachmen and fat men, the crunching of wheels, and the calling of names. To the girl whom Kenward Monk led on to strange fate it seemed like a dream. Some one followed with their bicycles. Monk took them from the man, and she saw him toss him several pieces of silver.

He did not tell her that he had procured a special license and made arrangements with a clergyman living two miles out of the town, asking him to be in his church to marry them. No name had been signed to the note; but he had argued to himself that the clergyman, who probably was badly in need of earning a fee, would put himself to some inconvenience to perform the ceremony. If his plan matured well, all well and good; if it miscarried, well, no one would be the wiser as to who sent the letter.

He assisted her to mount her bicycle, and, as if in a dream, they went speeding down the boulevard. He did not dare trust himself to speak. He felt like shouting. It is not often that a man can gain millions by a bold stroke like this, he said to himself; but he must not shout until he was out of the wood. The Calm's fortune was not his until he had made her his bride.

"We must make quicker time, my darling," he said.

Was it a sob he heard coming from the girl's lips? Rhoda seemed to have suddenly awakened to a sense of what she had done. A brief half-hour since she had been in the midst of a brilliant party, and now, scarcely knowing how it had come about, she found herself flying with the handsome lover, whom she had known but a few short weeks, going she knew not whither.

The awakening came to her like a terrible shock.

"Kenward!" she cried, "oh, Kenward, what have we done! Where are we going? I did not mean to run away. I must have been mad. Let us go back again!"

As she spoke, the great clock from some adjoining tower struck the hour of twelve.

"We are too late," he said. "We have burned our bridges behind us. They are unmaking now, and they have missed you. They will soon institute a search."

She clasped his arm.

"Oh, Kenward! I must tell you all!"

The hot, trembling hand clung to him, the lovely young face was full of awful grief.

He bit his lips, keeping back the fierce impatience that rose to them.

Heavens! success must not be wrested from him just as he was on the point of gaining it, and all because of this girl's whim.

"Are you repenting so soon, my darling?" he cried. "Oh, Rhoda! if you back out now, I pro-

mise you that I shall surely kill myself. I have a revolver in my breast-pocket. One pressure of the trigger, one moment of horrible pain, then all will end for me; but better death than to be parted from you after you have given me the hope that we should never part again."

"Oh, no, no! I do not shoot yourself, Kenward!" sobbed the girl. "I would die if you were to do anything like that."

"Then you will keep faith with me!" he cried, hoarsely.

"Oh, yes, yes! If you want me so much," sobbed the girl.

"My own darling!" he cried, leaning over and rapturously embracing her, though in doing so he nearly caused her to fall from her bicycle.

Suddenly the heavens overhead seemed to darken, the wind to freshen, and the booming of the waves, as they dashed heavily against the shore, sounded dimly in the distance.

"We must make haste," said Kenward Monk; "there is a storm coming up. I think we could save nearly half-a-mile by cutting across this field."

He swung open a gate opening out into a broad patch of land, and Rhoda rode in. They had scarcely gone a yard ere they heard a bellowing roar and the tramping of hoofs behind them. Kenward Monk turned white to the lips.

"Good Heaven! it is an angry bull!" he cried. "Ride for your life! Follow me! Search for your life!" he added, hoarsely. He shot out like an arrow from the bow, the terrified girl following in his wake.

On, on, came the angry bull, bellowing loudly, its wild snorting sounding nearer and nearer. The girl could not utter a word, a moan, or a sob.

"Keep up, for mercy's sake!" shouted Monk. "Bend to your handle-bars and pedal for your life! We can only hope to outdistance him. If he catches us it will mean death!"

On, on, with the speed of the wind, they went, trusting their very lives to their silent steeds. The wheels seemed to realize with almost human instinct that two human lives were entrusted to them.

On, rushed the bellowing and enraged bull, coming nearer and nearer to the terrified cyclists who were riding against the wind.

"There is a gate ahead!" cried Monk; "if we pass safely through it, we are saved. On, for Heaven's sake! Bend to your handle-bars and scorch! Go faster!"

One mile, two miles they had traversed; the terrible strain was telling upon her. The bicycle seemed to wobble with her, though she sent it onward.

One moment of vital terror. Could she reach the gate that Kenward had already shot through? Heaven have pity, have mercy! Before she could reach it the beast would be upon her, for her wheel was breaking down.

CHAPTER V.

It was a moment of the most intense excitement. Pen cannot picture words, cannot describe the horror that thrilled through the girl's heart as she realized her awful danger.

On, on, came the maddened brute. On, on, whirled Rhoda Calm; her white lips apart, every muscle strained.

It seemed as though the very breath of life was leaving her body.

One more effort. She shot through the gate, like a flash, and in that instant Kenward Monk swung the gate after her, in the very jaws of the maddened animal, that was brought to a sudden standstill, almost impaling him upon the pickets.

No sooner had the girl shot through the gate, than she fell on the other side of it.

"Great Heaven!" muttered Kenward Monk, springing forward. He was not in time to catch her. "Perhaps she is dead! What a lucky thing that I have this with me," he said, drawing a flask from his pocket, some of the contents of which he poured between her lips.

She soon opened her eyes and saw with amaz-

ment Kenward Monk bending over her in the moonlight.

"Did—did the animal kill me?" she cried.

"No," he answered; "you are worth a good many dead people yet. You got through the gate just in the nick of time. I shot the animal as he was about to make a fatal spring. But are you hurt, my darling?"

"No," cried Rhoda, clinging to him, with a great sob.

"Your bicycle broke as you fell from it," he exclaimed; "and with the tyre of mine punctured, we are in a sad fix, to be sure. I see a light glimmering in a window a short distance away. I will take you there, and walk back to the village to get some kind of a conveyance."

She made no objection to his plan, and in a few moments they found themselves knocking for admission at the little cottage from whence they had observed the light.

His impatient knock brought a white, terrified face to a window, which was opened above.

"What do you want?" asked a voice in unmistakable tones of fear.

"I must have shelter for this young lady for a little while," exclaimed Monk, impatiently; adding: "I will pay you handsomely if you will allow her to remain here an hour or two, until I can go for a carriage for her."

The window was closed quickly down again, and Kenward heard some one say quite distinctly:

"I tell you it is only a ruse. It is an officer of the law."

Again Monk knocked impatiently.

"It is commencing to rain," he called. "For Heaven's sake, open the door quickly!"

Despite the sobs and protestations of the voice inside, a man opened the door and stepped out, confronting them. One hand held a lighted lamp and the other rested upon his hip pocket.

To Kenward Monk's intense astonishment, he found that he was at the house of the Superintendent Registrar.

"I beg your pardon," stammered the man, in dire confusion.

"It is rather late to awaken anyone; but you have heard the words, 'any port in a storm'?" The truth is, I want to find shelter for this young lady until I can go for a conveyance to take her to a clergyman who is awaiting us to perform the marriage ceremony."

"Oh, that is it!" exclaimed the Registrar, with a look of relief coming over his face. "An open door, ah!"

"All is fair in love, you know," laughed the young man, leading Rhoda into the parlour, his host preceding them.

As he saw the unsteady gait of his host, he realised that the gentleman had been indulging in wine.

You will have a difficult time finding a minister to-night," he said. "There was some kind of a convention in a neighbouring village, and I believe they all went there."

This announcement made Monk desperate. Fate should not cheat him of the Cairns thousands while they were almost within his grasp, he told himself. Rhoda should be his bride, if he had to travel all the way to London to accomplish it. Suddenly an idea came to him. Heavens! how stupid he had been not to have thought of it before.

"You could manage the affair for us, if you only would, sir!" he cried. "You are a registrar?"

His host opened his lips to speak, then suddenly shut them again.

"I would pay you handsomely for it," said Kenward.

In looking around, he had noticed that, although his host held an envied position he was by no means well off in this world's goods, judging by the very plain surroundings.

"I will pay you handsomely," he repeated. To his great delight, he saw the man hesitate, and he said to himself: "He who hesitates is lost."

"Who are you, and who is the young lady?" inquired the man.

It was Monk's turn to hesitate now. If he found out that the young girl clinging to his arm was the heiress of the Cairns, would he not refuse

to perform the ceremony until they could be communicated with?

"I am Kenward Monk," answered the young man, affecting not to hear the last part of the question; and Rhoda, thinking she was called upon to speak, responded promptly:

"And I am Rhoda Cairn, sir."

The man wheeled about quickly.

"What? Did I hear you say the name Cairn? Are you the young girl staying at the big hotel, whom they call the niece of the Cairns?"

The girl was trembling so that she could not answer.

"We might as well put a bold front on the matter," whispered Monk, clasping quickly the ice-cold hands.

"She is, sir," he answered, with an air of assurance which he was far from feeling.

The effect of his words upon his host was wonderful. An expression that was almost diabolical flashed over his face.

The moment he had heard the name Kenward Monk he had recognised it as belonging to the fastest young man who had visited Brighton for many a day.

Many complaints had been made to him, and were pigeon-holed in the office until the detectives could find more conclusive proofs against the handsome, easy-going young man who was called as thoroughly bad.

"Hold!" he cried. "You need look no further for a clergyman; I will perform the ceremony. It is a pity for the young lady to have to go out in the storm to have a little service like that rendered. Old Cairn's niece!" he muttered under his breath. "Ah, what a glorious revenge it is for me to give her to this profligate; Of course old Cairn don't know anything about the escapade of this girl!"

He clenched his hands tightly together as he looked at her. There was no feature of old Cairn perceptible in this slender little creature; but for all that he hated her—ay, he hated her with deadly hatred. He knew why.

"I will help you in this affair," he said, with a peculiar laugh that might mean much or might mean little.

The ceremony was not a long one, and almost before Rhoda could realise what was taking place Kenward Monk was bending over her, and calling her his dear little wife. But there was something about the kiss that he laid on her lips that made a strange shiver creep over her.

Kenward Monk could hardly conceal his triumph. No matter if the Cairns did find her now, they could not undo what had been done. He had wedded her and her thousands.

He could have laughed aloud with enjoyment. He saw a grand future ahead of him. He had always had to pinch and save to get money. His watch and diamond pin were in pawn half the time.

His little bride should have two weeks of fools' paradise; then he would impress upon her the necessity for ready cash, and that his funds were running low. Then he would take her directly back to the Cairns. There would be a stormy scene, no doubt; then it would end by their taking the two home to live with them. Then wouldn't he cut a dash. He'd have a pair of horses that were horses—a coachman and a tiger too. He would sport diamonds so big that they would call attention to him in any crowd.

He would have a yacht—Lord Dunraven's would be nothing to it! He'd be a good master, trust him for that. He suddenly recollects that his host was speaking—congratulating him.

"Is there a train that leaves for London?" he asked.

"Yes; one passes here in about twenty minutes from now. By cutting across over that side road you could easily catch it."

Half-an-hour later they were steaming towards town as fast as steam could carry them. The dark, curly head nestled against his shoulder, while Kenward looked out of the window, out into the blackness of the night, little dreaming that he was on the eve of a terrible tragedy.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfuous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

He had been lucky enough to secure a first-class compartment, which those who have money enough to pay for can secure exclusively for themselves.

"I ought to tell you something that is weighing very heavily upon my mind, Kenward," she said, nestling closer to her fair, handsome, boyish husband.

"Not until to-morrow, love," he declared, drawing her towards him, and kissing her fondly. "Come, let me order some champagne to celebrate the beginning of our honeymoon."

He was so gay, so joyous, so debonair, that the girl-bride forgot everything else in his presence. The hours flew by on golden wings. It was the beginning of love's young dream.

She was so ecstatically happy in the present, that no thought of the future stretching beyond came to her just then, while those lips clung to hers in passionate kisses, and his arms encircled her. She had gone into a fairyland, a world of glamour, love, and romance.

"Oh, Kenward," she cried, clinging to him, listening to his passionate love-words with beaving bosom and tear-wet eyes, "do you think that the angels in Heaven are more happy than I am?"

The fair, handsome face bending over her looked disconcerted for a moment. The truth is, he knew very little about angels.

He bent over her and kissed her. That saved him from answering.

The porter had brought the champagne. Handsome Kenward had drank copiously of it; it seemed to make him only the gayer.

"Are you sure it is quite right to drink so much of this champagne?" she asked, dubiously.

He laughed her fears away with kisses and caresses. He had married the heiress of the Cairns, and he meant to celebrate it in his own way.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was early the next morning when the train steamed into London.

Kenward Monk cast a furtive glance around him as he stepped upon the platform. He had quite expected a dozen or more detectives to spring forward, for, of course, the telegraph wires had been busy during the night.

They would no doubt be waiting to arrest him for abducting the heiress. But when he had blandly informed them that lovely Rhoda Cairn was his wife, what could they do but fall back abashed and disconcerted.

To his great surprise, he seemed to create no sensation whatever. No one even noticed him as he joined the throng, with Rhoda clinging tightly to his arm.

"I will give them some little trouble to find us," he thought to himself.

He knew of a quiet, aristocratic family hotel facing the park, and placing Rhoda in a cab, he took a seat beside her, and directed the driver to proceed as quickly as possible to the place indicated.

He had paused a moment at a tobacconist's to buy a cigar. Ordinarily he would have been satisfied with ordinary cheap ones, now, with a lordly air:

"Two of your best imported," he said, imperiously.

The man looked after his stylish customer with something very like a smile on his lips—he had recognised Monk.

Whirling through the streets of London was quite a sensation to Rhoda, who had never been outside of her own country village, save for that fatal trip to Brighton.

With Kenward clasping her two little fluttering hands in one of his strong white ones, his left arm holding her close as the cab rattled on, her fear of the noise, the great rush of people hurrying hither and thither, and the great crush of vehicles that threatened to demolish them every moment, gradually subsided as they rode along.

"Of what are you thinking, my sweet?" said Kenward, noticing the thoughtful expression in the great slumberous black eyes.

She turned her glance full on the fair, handsome face bending down so dangerously near her own.

"I was thinking how grand it is to be loved as you love me, Kenward," she answered. "It is a different world from what I ever dreamed of. I shall always pity young girls after this who have no one to love them. How lonely they must be! Kenward," she asked, suddenly, a great fear leaping into the dark, velvety eyes, "are you sure you will always love me as much as you do now?"

He drew back from her with a look of pretended reproach, which looked very real to her inexperienced eyes, murmuring :

"Rhoda, love, how cruel of you to doubt your own true husband even for one little minute! Why, I shall love you more, and more, and more with each day that goes by; my whole life will be so wrapped up in yours, that every hour which I shall be obliged to pass away from you—even to attend to business—will be almost torture. We shall live in one continual honeymoon, adoring each other more and more, if that can possibly be. Our lives will be more beautiful than any poem that ever was written—ideal lives, caring for nothing in the whole world but each other, and the bliss of being together. We will always be lovers, ready to live or die for each other. Your relatives will see that I fairly worship their petted, spoiled darling, and that they might have done worse than give you to a free lance like myself, oh, precious!"

She tried to speak, but no words came from the lips that had grown quite pale. Before she could utter the words, they had reached their destination, and a moment more were ushered into the little white and gold room.

"We will have the best breakfast that they can prepare," said Kenward, "and then I shall take you to see the sights of the city."

He was obliged to take the hotel clerk into his confidence.

"It's an elopement," he whispered in the clerk's ear. "My bride is the heiress of the wealthy Cairns. There may be a deuce of a row when they trace us to this place, but it will end all right by the fatted calf being killed for us. But as for the breakfast, how long will it take to prepare it?"

"Not more than fifteen minutes," returned the clerk, with an obsequious bow. "We will send up to the sitting-room, and let you know when it is ready," he added.

He turned away with a royal air. Already he felt as if the Cairn thousands were in his pocket, that he was man to be envied, that he was of great importance.

"Ah!" he said, as he reached the door, "I had almost forgotten to inquire if the morning papers are here!"

"We do not get them until some twenty minutes later," replied the clerk. "I will send up a copy of one of them as soon as it comes. I will order the breakfast, sir, at once. Meanwhile, please make the lady as comfortable as possible, my dear sir, until it is ready."

Kenward Monk immediately joined Rhoda in the parlour. He found her ensconced in one of the large velvet easy-chairs, looking out of the window, with something very like fight in her great dark eyes.

"Oh, Kenward, are you sure it is quite right?" she sobbed. "Did you want me to marry you so very much?"

"What a silly little girl you are!" he cried, impetuously. "Of course I want you. I could not live without you. I know you must be very hungry, as well as tired from loss of sleep. Come over to this sofa and sit down and we will talk over our plans."

"Kenward," she whispered, clasping his hands closer, "you would not listen to me when I tried to tell you something in the conservatory; but you must listen to me now. I cannot be quite happy, dear, until you know all. I—I have a confession to make."

He looked at her blankly.

"What odd words you use, my darling Rhoda!" he said. "A confession! I do not like to hear you use such an expression. I hope that there is no other lover in the background!"

"It is not a lover!" she cried, clinging to him. "I have never loved anyone else but you!"

"Then it is all right, my angel!" he cried, brightly, gathering her closely to him, despite the fact that people were passing in the corridor outside, and had a full view of all that was taking place within the room. She struggled out of his arms, blushing like a peony, even though she was his bride.

"Sit opposite me, where I can see you, and it will not be so hard to tell you all," sobbed Rhoda, faintly.

He complied with her wishes.

"Cut the story as short as possible, dear," he said, "or you will be obliged to have it continued in our next, as breakfast will soon be ready."

"Oh, how shall I tell you the truth, Kenward," she said, distressedly. "Perhaps you won't smile so when you know all, and—and—you might even hate me."

"No matter what the little story is that you have to tell me, my darling, I will love you better than ever."

"Oh, Kenward, are you sure of it!" she cried, with that frightened look which puzzled him so.

"Yes; I give you my word beforehand, that, no matter what you have to tell me, I will love you all the more."

How relieved she was to hear him say so. She smiled through her tears, and her smiles were like rays of April sunshine.

She looked at him eagerly.

"Surely he must love me, or he would never have asked me to become his wife," she thought. "And yet, what will he say when he knows all?"

She trembled with apprehension, despite his assurance.

Oh, if she could but keep the awful truth from him for ever. But no; it could not be. It might be a question of only a few hours ere he would discover the truth. Better that it should come from her lips than for him to hear it in any other way.

"It did not seem to me that it was wicked at first," she began, with a little sob; "but oh! since I have known you, it has all been changed." "She has got into some idle flirtation with some fellow," he thought. "Heavens! I have seized my prize in the very nick of time. What a fortune I have cheated some fellow out of!"

His eyes glowed, and his heart beat faster than was its wont.

"You need have no fear, Rhoda," he said. "I am amused at that serious little face of yours, 'pon my word."

"Oh, don't joke so lightly over the matter, Kenward!" she said, piteously. "Indeed, it is no laughing matter."

"Still, it is not one for tears," he answered lightly.

"Heaven grant that you may think so, after you have heard all," she murmured.

Her seriousness made him wonder, though he was disposed to treat the matter lightly. What was this escapade of which she stood in such great awe? Had she overdrawn her monthly allowance?—lost some of the family jewels?

"Kenward," she said, breaking suddenly into his reverie, "say that you will forgive me, no matter what it is."

"I have said that already," he declared; "but I will gladly repeat it again for your especial benefit. I promise not to be angry, no matter what this especial escapade may have been. I have no idea that it is as serious as you seem to think it," he declared. "I expect to be heartily amused over the recital, my little angel, and both of us will enjoy a merry laugh over it, I'm sure."

She looked at him half doubtfully.

"But it is truly something so very wrong," she persisted.

Again he laughed that reassuring laugh that was so pleasant for Rhoda to hear.

"You would not have asked me to marry you

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Doctor" (purely vegetable), 2/-, from Chocolates, 3/-, post free from Dr. HORN, "Glenlendar," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

EPPS'S

EXTRACT FROM A LECTURE ON "FOODS AND THEIR VALUES," BY DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., etc.—
"If any motives—first, of due regard for health, and second, of getting full food-value for money expended—then I say that Cocoa (Epps's being the most nutritious) should be made to replace tea and coffee without hesitation. Cocoa is a food; tea and coffee are not foods. This is the whole science of the matter in a nutshell, and he who runs may read the obvious moral of the story."

COCOA

LADIES' APIOL AND STEEL PILLS.

A FRENCH REMEDY FOR ALL IRRREGULARITIES. Superseding Pennyroyal, Bitter Apple, and PHI COCHINE. Price 4d. post-free. Obtainable only from MARTIN, Pharmaceutical Chemist, Southampton.

DOES YOUR HEADACHE?

"KAPUTINE" cures Instantly.

Enclose stamped addressed envelope to "K. KAPUTINE, LTD., HUNTERSFIELD, for free sample, with name of nearest agent.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S Prevents Decay, Safes Extraction, Sleepless Nights
Neuralgic Headaches and all Nerves
Pains removed by BUNTER'S
NERVINE All Cheshire, 1d. 1d.

TOBACCOISTS COMMENCING.
See Ill. Guide (25 pages), 1d. How to open a
Cigar Store, &c., to 12/- TOBACCOISTS
LETTING CO., 180, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

The largest and original house (20 years' repute). Manager, H. MYERS, Hairdresser fitted up. Estimates free.

ALEX. ROSS' SKIN TIGHTENER OR TONIC.
The application of this to the face removes wrinkles and the crow's feet marks, giving a youthful appearance. 3s. 6d., sent secretly packed for 50 stamps.—62, Theobald's Road, London, W.C. Ear Machine, for outstanding ears, 10s. ed.; post, 11s.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilages of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10s. 6d., sent free for stamps.—ALEX. ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Established 1850. Parcel free from observation.

THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 6d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C.

OTTEY'S STRONG FEMALE PILLS.

Quickly and certainly remove all obstructions, arising from any cause whatever, where Steel and Pennyroyal fails. Invaluable to women. Post-free, under cover, for 14 and 35 stamps from THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent. Please mention LONDON READER.

“DRUNKENNESS”

CURED. A lady having cured her husband secretly of intemperance will gladly send particulars of the remedy to any one forwarding stamped envelope.—Write privately Mrs. L. B. BARDEN, TON, 4, Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C. Powders are used.

SIXTY YEARS' SUCCESS.

WHELPTON'S
PURIFYING PILLS

For
Indigestion,
Headache,
Biliousness,
Constipation,
Sea Sickness.

VALUABLE
FOR LADIES.

Estab. 1835.
G. Whelpton & Son, 3, Crane Ct., Fleet St., London, (7197).

unless you loved me, would you, Kenward? Tell me that first," she asked, eagerly, her face white as death.

"Certainly not," he replied, quickly.

"I will tell you all, then, and throw myself on your mercy to forgive me for the past," she sobbed. "Hold my hands, Kenward, closely in your own, while I tell you all of the pitiful past, from beginning to end; and then, Kenward, you shall kiss my tears away, even—oh, Heaven, pity me!—though I have sinned beyond pardon!"

(To be continued.)

FACETIES.

OLD GIRL: "She gets her complexion from her mother's folk." Antique: "Ah, indeed! Are they chemists, then?"

Lord FORBES: "I can trace my descent from John Milton. How's that for a descent?" Miss Millyuns: "It's a great descent, sure enough."

Mr. RICHFELLOW: "How pretty Miss Beauty looks to-night." Rival Belle: "Yes. How miserably poor the electric lights have become lately. They are dimmer than gas."

SIR: "I said the haughty Lady Constance, 'I can read you like a book.' 'Oh, then, tell me,' cried Reginald de Sennelis breathlessly, 'do I marry the rich heiress in the last chapter?'

I HAVE half a mind to get married," said the Lonely Man. "It takes," said the Savage Bachelor, "just about that amount of mind to think of such a thing."

LADY ARTIST: "Do you belong to that ship over there?" Sailor: "Yes, miss." Lady Artist: "Then would you mind loosening all those ropes? They are much too tight, and, besides, I can't draw straight lines!"

SMARTFELLOW (anxious to poke fun at an old maid): "Let me see. It's a long time since we last met, is it not, Miss Antique?" Miss Antique: "A very long time. How well that suit of clothes has hung together!"

WHAT I know about riding a bike," said the scorch, "would fill a book." "Yes," said the policeman who had gathered him in, "and what you don't know about it would soon fill the mortuary."

CURATE (new to the district): "My poor child, is it possible that your parents can be so depraved as to send a little boy like you for beer?" The Poor Child: "Parlors! This ain't for no parlors. It's for meself!"

HIGHLAND Father: "Hoot awa, mon, I wadna gie ma consent to a blestherin' eejit that hasna saxpence!" Highland Suitor: "Hech, sir, that's ower strong." Highland Father: "Awful, it may be sae. Have ye more nor saxpence?"

"Do you think," said the man who had bought a large tract of arid land, "that I shall be able to water this waste?" "I dunno," replied the native. "It strikes me, though, that there's a heap better chance of your wasting the water."

"NEVER forget, boys," said the teacher, earnestly, "that time is money." "You don't say so!" ejaculated the new scholar. "Then my papa must be awfully rich!" "How so, Tommy?" "'Cause he got seven years last Tuesday!"

THAT escaped criminal seems to have had rather the best of it," remarked the talkative friend. "Not at all," replied the detective, drawing himself up haughtily. "We've got him so frightened he doesn't dare show his face where we are."

"I HEAR your son has secured a position as book-keeper for a large firm and is doing splendidly," said Mr. Jones to Mr. Smith. "Yes, but he isn't at all well," said the anxious father. "Indeed? What seems to be the matter?" "The doctor says it is nervous prosperity."

ONE day a little urchin found a shilling on the footpath, which was instantly claimed by a man standing by. The younger, however, assumed a terrified air, and blubbered out: "Your shilling hadn't a hole in him." "Oh, yes he had!" answered the eager rogue. "Then this 'un ain't!" coolly replied the urchin, and walked off with it in triumph.

THE Hyde Park orator dragged himself out of the railway wreck and took account of damages. One foot was twisted out of shape, something was the matter with his right hip, his left elbow refused to work, one of his shoulder-blades appeared to have slipped over the other, his left knee was bruised and swollen, and part of his scalp was gone. He emitted a loud groan. Then his face brightened. "Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "My voice isn't injured! I'm all right!"

"SAY, m'us," said Meandering Mike, "do you wanter hire anybody?" "No." "Ye don't think yer husband wants ter hire anybody, do yer?" "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am sure he does not." "Tain't no disapp'ntment. I jes' wanted the assurance that I could go ter sleep in this barn wit'out bein' disturbed by offers of work."

SERVANT: "I've come to give notice, ma'am, as I am going to get married." Mistress: "Indeed, Mary! How long have you been engaged?" Servant: "I ain't engaged at all, ma'am." Mistress: "Well, who is the happy man?" Servant: "You know the big draper's shop down the road! Well, the shopwalker looked at me the day before yesterday, and yesterday he smiled, and to-day he said 'Good-morning,' and I guess to-morrow he'll propose; and you see, ma'am, I want to be ready."



CALVERT'S CARBOLIC OINTMENT IS A SOVEREIGN REMEDY

For Chafed Skin, Piles, Sore Eyes, Throat Colds, Earache, Neuralgic and Rheumatic Pains, Insect Bites, Scalds, Guts, Ringworm, Chapped Hands, Chilblains, and Skin Ailments generally. Large Pots 13*d*. each.

Can be obtained at Chemists, Stores, &c., or post free for value.

F.C. CALVERT & CO. (P.O. BOX 513) MANCHESTER.

PEARL COATED AND TASTELESS.
ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD.
Composed of Steel, Pennyroyal,
Bitter Apple, Aloes, Picocinch
and other Drugs known
only to Dr. Brown.

1/13, 2/9 & 5/6.
SENT FREE FROM
OBSERVATION.
Have no equal.
ADDRESS:
INSTITUTE, SHOREDITCH, LONDON, N.E.
AVOID DISHONEST IMITATORS.

DR BROWN'S FAMOUS FEMALE PILLS



GREY HAIR NECROCEINE (Registered).

Stains Grey Hair, Whiskers, Eye-brows any shade desired. Does not stain the Skin. Is applied in a few minutes. It is harmless, Washable, Lasting, and Restores the Colour to the Root, making detection impossible, and is undoubtedly the Cleanest and Best Hair Stain in the World. No. 1, Light Brown; No. 2, Golden; No. 3, Dark Brown; No. 4, Black. Sent secretly packed by post for 1s. 3d., 2s. 3d., 3s. 3d., 5s. and 10s.

Medical Certificate sent with each Bottle.

Write for Unsolicited Testimonials.

Address—M. LEIGH & CRAWFORD, 31, Brooke St., Holborn, London, E.C.

SOCIETY.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will be in residence at York Cottage until the middle of next month.

THE Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess of Saxe will leave St. Petersburg about the middle of February for Paris, and they intend to spend two months on the Riviera and in Italy.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales and the Duke of York have had much exercise and recreation lately in the covered-in cycle track that has recently been erected at Sandringham. Princess Victoria and Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark are very clever riders.

THE Princess Ingeborg (Princess Carl of Sweden and Norway), who, according to Scandinavian custom, retains her maiden name even after marriage, has been elected the first honorary member of the Swedish Slöjd Association, the society for female arts and handicrafts for which Sweden is celebrated.

PRINCESS CHARLES OF DENMARK has one of the most curious collections of ivory to be seen anywhere. Amongst her curios are the tusks of elephants shot by the Prince Consort, and the teeth of wild boars killed by the Tsar.

THEY are to be two Drawing Rooms at Buckingham Palace about the first week in March, and it is probable that both of them will be held by the Princess of Wales for the Queen. In this case the Queen is to "receive" the Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers at one of the Drawing Rooms which will take place at the beginning of May, after her Majesty's return from the Continent, unless a diplomatic and Official Court should be held by the Queen at Buckingham about March 1st.

THE Queen has lately purchased two very curious old water-colour paintings, one of the Town Hall, Windsor, and the other of St. John's Parish Church. The Town Hall is depicted in the days when steps led up from High-street into the Corn Market; and, similarly, St. John's Church is portrayed with a very queer little extinguisher belfry, instead of its present imposing tower.

THE first Royal wedding of the New Year will be that of Duke Günther of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg and the Princess Dorothea of Saxe Coburg and Gotha, which will take place in Vienna in February, when the Duke and Duchess of Connaught will represent the Queen, and the wedding will also be attended by the Prince and Princess Christian and Princess Victoria (uncle, aunt, and cousin of the bridegroom). It is also probable that the Duke of Coburg will be present as the head of the House.

AN addition has now been made to the Imperial and Royal guests who are expected to join the Queen at Osborne early in February, as Princess Henry of Prussia, whose husband has just sailed for Chinese waters, will be a visitor of Her Majesty's at the same time as the Empress Frederick and the Hereditary Princess, and Princess Feodora of Saxe-Meiningen. All these distinguished visitors, according to the present arrangements, will also accompany the Queen to Windsor about the third week in February, and continue their visit for some time at the Castle.

ACCORDING to present arrangements, the Queen and Princess Beatrice will leave Windsor for the Riviera on the morning of Tuesday, March 8th, travelling by special train to Portsmouth Harbour, and crossing the Channel in the Royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* to Caerbourg. Her Majesty will dine and sleep on board the yacht in Cherbourg Harbour, proceeding next morning direct to Nice, and arriving at Cimiez on the afternoon of Thursday, the 10th.

IN a splendid room in the palace of Potsdam, one of the decorations is the figure of a large spider wrought in gold. An interesting tradition attaches to this piece of work. It commemorates an incident in the life of Frederick William, the grand-uncle of the present Emperor of Germany. An attempt had been made to poison him in a cup of chocolate. By chance a spider fell into the cup, and for this reason the beverage was given to a dog, who immediately upon taking it died. The cook was afterwards hanged.

STATISTICS.

SPACE has a temperature of 200 degrees below zero.

THERE are four millionaires in England to one in France.

ON an average, every woman carries forty to sixty miles of hair upon her head.

IN Morocco, when the Sultan marries every subject is expected to contribute a wedding-present.

IT is stated that there are nearly one thousand theological students in the five seminaries in or near Chicago.

GEMS.

IT is better to deserve praise and not get it, than to get praise and not deserve it.

HEARTS may be attracted by assumed qualities, but the affections can only be fixed and retained by those that are real.

IF you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.

WHAT comfort, what strength, what economy there is in order—material order, intellectual order, moral order! Order means light and peace, inward liberty, and free command over one's self. Order is power.

THE shortest and surest way to live with honour in the world, is to be in reality what we would appear to be; and if we observe, we shall find that all human virtues increase and strengthen themselves by the practice and experience of them.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRICASSEED TRIPS WITH OYSTERS.—Cut a pound of tripe in narrow strips, put a small cup of water or milk to it, and a bit of butter the size of an egg, dredge in a large teaspoonful of flour, or work it with the butter; season with salt and pepper; let it simmer gently for half an hour; serve hot. Put oysters in five minutes before dishing up.

CLOUDED CHOCOLATE CAKE.—One cup of sugar, half cup of butter, two eggs, half cup of milk, two cups of flour, half teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, sifted with the flour. Flavour with vanilla. Take almost half of this mixture, and make as dark as required with grated chocolate. Put in the tin the same as for marble cake.

VEAL HASH WITH EGGS.—Chop fine remnants of cold roast veal. To a pint of meat add half a cup of fine, stale bread-crumb, and nearly a cup and a half of gravy. Put in a saucepan over the fire to heat. When hot add three eggs, slightly beaten, and stir until the eggs are set, then serve at once. Tomato sauce may be used if no meat gravy be at hand.

LEMON TAPIOCA.—Two tablespoonsfuls of tapioca soaked overnight in half cup of water. Add half a cup of cold water in the morning, peeled rind of a lemon, and boil until clear. Then take out the rind, add the juice of the lemon, teaspoonful of lemon extract, half cup each of sugar and boiling water, a pinch of salt, and boil. Mould, and serve with sugar and cream.

APPLE DUMPLING.—Sift together two and a half cups of flour and two teaspoonsfuls baking powder. Add a cup of sweet milk and a tablespoonful of melted butter. Stir into a batter. Half fill a buttered baking-dish with quarters of pared sour apples. Pour the batter over them, and bake three-quarters of an hour, or until nicely browned. Serve with a hard or soft sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Sandwich Islanders estimate the beauty of women by their weight.

THE tomb of Mohammed is covered with diamonds, sapphires, and rubies valued at £2,500,000.

IN Manchuria dogs are raised for their skins. A fairly prosperous Manchurian dog-farmer will own 1,000 or more dogs.

UNBREAKABLE mirrors are now being made by putting a coat of quicksilver at the back of a very thin sheet of celluloid.

THE juice of the leaf-beetle is used for poisoning arrow-heads by the bushmen of the South African district Kalabar.

A LEARNED antiquarian says that smoking-pipes of bronze are frequently found in Irish sepulchral mounds of the most remote antiquity.

THE summer coat of the Polar fox is almost black. In winter it is so white that the animal can scarcely be seen as it runs over the snow.

SOLDIERS in the Italian army are permitted to sleep a couple of hours in the middle of the day. The time is fixed in the general orders.

IN Alaska even the dogs are required to wear shoes. This is to protect their feet against the rough mountain ice over which they have to travel.

THE octopus has appeared in the Norwegian fjord. A specimen with tentacles over ten feet long was recently captured by boatmen in those waters.

BROKEN glass and the waste from glass furnaces are melted down, dressed, and cut into beautiful slabs, forming an artificial marble of decorative design.

IN Nuremberg, Bavaria, there are many very ancient houses still in an excellent state of preservation, some of which were built as early as the year 1080.

WHEREVER a profound cavity exists in the bed of the ocean near the land earthquakes are frequent, being caused by great pieces of the land sliding off into the depths of the sea.

LIVE bees are sometimes shipped on ice to keep them dormant during the voyage. They were thus taken into New Zealand, to fertilise the red clover recently introduced there.

FEBRUARY, 1866, was in one way the most wonderful month in the world's history. It had no full moon. January and March each had two full moons, but February had none. Astronomers say this is the only instance on record.

COMPRESSED air is the latest padding for harness saddles. It is much superior to hair stuffing, as it greatly lessens the pressure and the possibility of rubbing sores in the horse's back.

AN Italian has recently made a boat of cement. The framework is of small steel bars covered with a wire-netting, the latter being in turn covered with the cement. It is claimed that this boat is cheaper than a wooden one.

THE most fashionable street of Berlin, the famous Unter den Linden, is said to be now the best-lighted thoroughfare in the world. It has three lines of electric arc lamps, which are separated by two rows of lime trees.

IN the island of Java is a small state which is entirely controlled by women, with the single exception that the sovereign is a man. He is, however, entirely dependent on his State Council of three women.

CLOVER sickness, a common disease that often ruins clover crops, has caused German scientists to make experiments. They now say that farmers will soon be able to inoculate their land just as human beings may be treated.

A LITTLE Esquimaux child will bite through the skin of a walrus as easily as an English child will bite an apple, although the skin of this creature is from half an inch to an inch and a half in thickness, and very much resembles an elephant's hide—and not only bite it, but swallow it, and yet not suffer from indigestion.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Puzzled.—First make inquiry of your solicitor.

S. L.—They cannot touch her separate property.

ARTHUR.—Any bookseller will procure the work for you.

A. G.—He must allow you reasonable access to the child.

Florry.—Salt meat must be particularly slowly cooked.

Jill.—St. Wenceslaus was Duke of Bohemia in 926-935 A.D.

B. S.—The first expedition to the South Pole took place in 1857.

Ignorant.—You would say in finishing:—"I am, sir, yours respectfully."

Interested.—There is no home suitable to the case so far as we know.

A. G.—If there is no will all the property will go to the husband.

Jane.—The lines quoted are from the song, "The Flowers of the Forest."

Anxious.—There is only one way; make inquiry in every likely direction.

Cockney.—We do not know of any institution so named, but there may be one in the provinces.

Curious.—One pound of cork is sufficient to support a man of ordinary size in the water.

Deceitful.—Anything in silver, china or glass would be appropriate.

Dishonest.—There are several versions; the one you give is, we believe, the most accurate.

Marie.—If anything was wrong with the tin it would affect the outside of the peach.

A. K.—The Turkish bath system is probably the safest of any in ordinary use.

A. L.—An action for breach of promise of marriage cannot be brought against an infant.

Bruce.—We have known of too many accidents with the apparatus you name to advise on the subject.

Gerald.—We have no idea where you would be certain to obtain such wood as you wish.

Agnes.—Ordinary pudding raisins will answer if the others are too expensive, but the others are more delicate in flavour.

E. V.—You would probably gain more in the long run by completing your training at a large establishment.

Woman.—Superfuous hairs can be permanently removed only with the electric needle, and that must be done by an experienced hand.

Polly.—Salt mixed with lemon juice is an excellent thing for removing the stains of ink, tar, or paint from the hands.

Maria.—A silver match safe, as you suggest with monogram engraved, is excellent. Nothing could be better.

S. M.—Sprinkle a little powdered pumice-stone upon a cloth wrung out of warm soap-suds and apply to the spots.

Lily.—It is very difficult to remove on anything, but particularly on a dress that will lose the colour. We fear, if it really is mildew, you will need to get it dyed.

Hard-working.—Take geography by itself, and first; in taking history later you will find knowledge of course helps to make it more intelligible, and fix it in the memory.

Old Reader.—There must be a new election. But if a member is turned out on petition, the House of Commons can declare his defeated opponent to have been the lawfully elected member.

Quennt.—The Colonies and India "belong to England" in the sense that they are under the British Crown, and their laws are subject to the veto of the Crown.

Maggie.—The fowl-house should be frequently cleaned out and re-sanded, and the out-of-door runs should be kept well supplied with abundance of fresh dry sand, powdered earth, or earth and ashes mixed.

Arnold.—If you wish to enter Colonial forces, write to Crown Counsel for Colonies, Downing-street; if you wish Agent-General for the Cape address him at Victoria-chambers, Victoria-street, London, S.W.

Brenda.—Apples keep best when cool and dry. Sudden change of temperature induces the collection of moisture on the skin, which dissolves the delicate varnish with which the apple is covered, and it soon decays.

IF YOU LOVE HER, TELL HER SO!

You have not forgot the summer
When your love-dream came to you,
And the wooing and the winning
Of the heart that's been so true.
Years have gone, and still you love her,
But we often careless grow;
Though your love's as warm as ever,
Do you often tell her so?

Do you think she has forgotten,
In the fitting of the years,
Words she loved to hear you utter—
Only meant for lovers' ears?
No! she never will forget them,
Tender words so sweet and low,
And to-day she longs to hear them;
If you love her, tell her so!

Those old, happy days of wooing,
For the world's shed not forget,
Though the honeymoon is over,
You should be loves yet.
When the cares of life are many,
And its burdens heavy now,
Help her bear them, and I pray you
If you love her, tell her so!

Loving words will cost you nothing,
And you cannot tell their power;
Cannot know how much they brighten
All the shadows of the hour.
Grudge them not, as on life's journey goes;
Through this world of ours you go;
To the faithful hearts beside you,
If you love them, tell them so!

L. V.—If you apply to the registrar of the district in which the birth took place, giving him names and dates, he will furnish you with extract certificates of registration for Sa. 21.

M. H.—The special glory of the Victoria Cross is that it recognises equal bravery in all ranks; the same cross, with the same 210 years attached to it, is conferred upon the humble private and the Commander-in-Chief for that matter.

Constant Reader.—Nationality is conferred by parentage, nativity by place of birth; you are confusing two things which are not at all identical; nationality is sometimes called blood; and the child takes it from his father.

Sophia.—It is impossible to say what makes the hair turn grey; the change is often connected with nervous depression or excitement, but quite as often occurs in comparatively young people like yourself, without any apparent reason for it.

Housewife.—Candling eggs is the one infallible way to test them. This is done in a dark room with a candle, gas, or electric light. When the egg is held close to the light, if fresh it will appear a pinkish yellow, and if otherwise it will be dotted with opaque spots or be entirely dark.

Katherine.—Small whittings or filleted fish are best to steam; have the fish clean and very nice and dry, butter a plate and put the fish on it, sprinkle over them a little pepper and salt, and a few bits of butter over them; turn another plate over them, or, if more suitable, cover closely with a lid; put this on a saucepan with boiling water and steam till ready, twenty or thirty minutes as the fish requires; may be served on the plate.

Woman May.—You will doubtless find that your feet will not grow much more in size. As to stopping the growth, do not try to do it. Do not try wearing small shoes, nor anything else, just let nature have her way. If you are to have large feet accept it as the inevitable. Wear a good-looking shoe that will help to conceal the size. But there is nothing to be ashamed of.

Sara.—Generally, it is quite sufficient for a young lady to acknowledge an introduction by a bow, in passing acquaintance. If, on the other hand, the party to be introduced and your friend are upon terms of most intimate friendship, it would be perfectly proper for you to indicate your pleasure in being permitted to know the third party, by greeting him with a handshake and some appropriate expression.

100 YEARS' REPUTATION
KEARSLEY'S FEMALE
WIGG WELCH'S PILLS.

Arrived Certificate of Merit for the cure of all obstructions, irregularities, aments, and all female complaints. They contain no irritant, and have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of imitations. The only genuine are in "Mrs. Farmer's Wrappers," and have the name of "C. and G. Kearsley," Boxes, 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s., of all chemists; sent privately on receipt of 1s. or 1s. 6d., by the makers, C. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster.



The LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free, Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

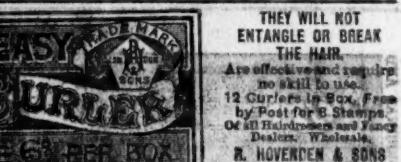
ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 440, is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXIX, bound in cloth, 1s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXIX, is now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-Halfpence.

LET ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 26, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.



THEY WILL NOT ENTANGLE OR BREAK THE HAIR.
Are effective and ready no skill is needed.
12 Curlers in Box, Free by Post for 6 Shillings.
Of all Hairdressers and Fancy Dealers, Wholesale.
R. HOVENDEN & SONS
Bernard St. W. and
City Rd. E.C. London.

Equal in size and quality to any Machine. Works by Hand or Treadle. 4 years' guarantee.
To ensure satisfaction we will send Machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for one month's trial.
Balance can be paid 5/- MONTHLY.
Call or Write for Descriptions and Samples of Work.
THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,
12, HIGH STREET, CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON,
23, SEVEN SISTERS RD.; 14, HIGH RD., KILBURN.
(Please quote this Paper).

PEPPER'S TONIC
Promotes Appetite.
CURES DYSPEPSIA, HYSTERIA, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS.
SHILLING BOTTLES.

SULPHOLINE LOTION
A SPOTLESS SKIN.
A BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION.
ERUPTIONS, PIMPLES
NIRLY FADE AWAY.



**STRONG ARMS are
NOT NECESSARY**

to do the washing when

Sunlight Soap . . .

is used; it does nearly all the work itself. Just rub a little on the clothes, roll them up and put them back in the water. Then when you take them out you will see that

Sunlight Soap does the work.

"Strongest and Best."

—Health.

FRY'S
Pure Concentrated
COCOA

"The Richest in flesh-forming and energy-producing constituents." —Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E.
200 GOLD MEDALS & DIPLOMAS.

BORWICK'S BAKING POWDER

Weekly
Sale
exceeds
600,000
Packages.

When ordering Baking Powder insist on having BORWICK'S, which is the best that money can buy.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S



ORIGINAL AND
ONLY GENUINE

CHLORODYNE

**COUGHS, COLDS,
ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS.**

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE is a liquid medicine which assuages PAIN OF EVERY KIND, affords a calm, refreshing sleep, WITHOUT HEADACHE, and invigorates the nervous system when exhausted.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE. — Vice-Chancellor Sir W. PAGE WOOD stated publicly in Court that Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE was undoubtedly the INVENTOR of CHLORODYNE, that the whole story of the defendant Freeman was deliberately untrue, and he regretted to say it had been sworn to.—See *The Times*, July 13th, 1884.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE is the TRUE PALLIATIVE in NEURALGIA, GOUT, CANCER, TOOTHACHE, RHEUMATISM.

IS THE GREAT SPECIFIC FOR
DIARRHOEA, DYSENTERY, CHOLERA.

GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH, London, REPORT that it ACTS as a CHARM, one dose generally sufficient.

Dr. GIBBON, Army Medical Staff, Calcutta, states:—"TWO DOSES COMPLETELY CURED ME OF DIARRHOEA."

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE rapidly cuts short all attacks of **EPILEPSY, SPASMS, COLIC, PALPITATION, HYSTERIA.**

IMPORTANT CAUTION. — The IMMENSE SALE of this REMEDY has given rise to many UNSCRUPULOUS IMITATIONS. Be careful to observe TRADE MARK. Of all Chemists. 1/1, 2/6, & 4/6. Sole Manufacturer—J. T. DAVENPORT, 33, Great Russell Street, London, W.C.